This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

HN 1IAW F

Winona of Camp Karonya

Margaret Widdemer

Digitized by Google

KD 13413

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

WINONA OF CAMP KARONYA

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

WINONA SUGGESTED THAT THEY ALL GET INTO THE AUTO AND GO BACK HOME

Digitized by Google

WINONA OF CAMP KARONYA

By MARGARET WIDDEMER

AUTHOR OF

"Winona's War Farm," "Winona of the Camp Fire," "Winona's Way."

A. L. BURT COMPANY

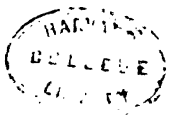
Publishers New York

Published by arrangement with J. B. Lippincott Company

Printed in U. S. A.

Digitized by Google

KD13413



COPYRIGHT, 1917, BY J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY

Digitized by Google

TO

MARIAN MACDOWELL,
ABBIE, E. A. PARKER,
JACK, BOB AND DOUGLAS,

NONE OF WHOM EVER COULD BE CONVINCED THAT I REALLY DID WORK, THIS BOOK, MAINLY WRITTEN DURING OUR JOYOUS SIX WEEKS AT PETERBOROUGH, IS TRIUMPHANTLY DEDICATED

Digitized by Google

AUTHOR'S ACKNOWLEDGMENT

THANKS ARE DUE TO LIEUTENANT W. H. DRAPER FOR INFORMATION CONCERNING SCOUT WORK, AND TO MISS NELLIE LOUISE THOMPSON FOR MATERIAL CONTAINED IN CHAPTER NINE

Digitized by Google

PUBLISHER'S FOREWORD

In this period of National Stress when girls everywhere are so admirably doing their part in helpfulness, it is a great pleasure to be privileged to present a story for girls which, through the courteous coöperation of one of the leaders of Camp Fire Girls, combines with the author's gayety and charm of writing those sound precepts fathered by that interesting and important organization.

Much careful thought has been given to the details of a gorgeous Camp Fire Pageant and to activities suited to the autumn and the winter months. Instead of the days being humdrum by comparison with the free summer life, treated in the author's volume "Winona of the Camp Fire," they are filled with diverting and important happenings and, in one event at least, with results vital and far-reaching. The story itself is woven around Winona—a spirited, winsome and very real girl.

The Publishers

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

WINONA OF CAMP KARONYA

CHAPTER ONE

LOUISE LANE, bending over her pack, lifted up her voice in cheerful song.

> There are dishes to do, mending to do,
> Cooking to do,
> And something for you, yes, something for you,
> O plenty for you!
> So shake off dull care,
> Hide that look of despair,
> And get busy, get busy, get——"

Here her encouraging, if somewhat aggravating carol was cut short by a pair of neatly-rolled woolly tan stockings, which the girl next her had straightened up from her own pack to throw at her.

"Louise," said Winona Merriam, "if you can't think of anything else to sing that's more comforting than that, that will be about all from you."

Louise, fourteen, chubby, red-haired and incurably cheerful, grinned.

"It's a fine song," she said. "Here we are, leaving our dear camp, on our way to our dear homes, and it's a good idea to remind you and Helen that there is something to look forward to."

Digitized by Google

"We don't need it," laughed back Winona, sitting on her heels and looking at her pack.

Winona, Louise, and ten other girls of about their age, together with some of their younger sisters, had been camping on the shores of a little river, about five miles from their home, for most of the summer. They had organized their Camp Fire just about in time to have things smoothly running for the trip, which they had made a hike. They had had a triumphant summer, because the ways they had taken to earn money had proved successful—owing partly to the fact that they were camping near a summer resort, and that Louise and Winona were resourceful. Now the opening of school drew near, and they were going home.

"I've done cooking and mending and dishes in my own happy home, while you girls were having good times up here," Winona went on.

"Well, didn't you have a good time out of it, and didn't you get your Torchbearer's rank ahead of all the rest of us?" demanded Louise.

Winona smiled reminiscently, abandoning all pretence of tying up her pack. "I certainly did!" she answered. "I don't see yet where all my honors came from. I enjoyed getting them too much to have it seem fair that I should have them."

She leaned her brown head, with its flowing curls,

Digitized by Google

back against a tree that was close to her, and her mind went back to a very mournful occasion some weeks before, when she had been snatched from the camp fun by her mother's sprained ankle. She had hated going away from the girls, and all the good times, and her chance of honors; and then it had turned out that the very work about the home that she'd dreaded, had secured her honors enough to complete her list for the Torchbearer rank.

"How nice things are!" said she amiably to Louise, who was about to answer, when the third member of their trio, Helen Bryan, came up behind them, putting a hand on each shoulder.

"Come on down to the village, girls, for the last time," said she. "I need more twine to do up bundles."

"If anybody says 'last time' to me again I shall burst into tears and sob bitterly," threatened Louise; however, she dropped her bundle with alacrity and fell into step beside Helen and Winona.

"It is dreadful, leaving Camp Karonya," Winona agreed, half sadly, "but, after all, we couldn't spend the whole autumn here—and school opens day after to-morrow."

"Haven't you any more pleasant reminders to offer?" inquired Louise indignantly. "Why not tell me again that my mother is saving up all my dear little brothers' mending for me till I get home?"

Digitized by Google

"You asked her to," Helen responded calmly. "You wanted it for the——"

"I know I did. I aspired to heaps of beautiful mending honors; but I don't aspire a bit more. I have to go home to school and only wear bloomers once a week, while I'm taking my exercises in the gym as a little lady should. And mother says it's time I entertained a little more, such as teas. Pink teas, I suppose."

And Louise, who, in spite of her wails, couldn't keep serious for more than two minutes at a time, burst into song again.

"I didn't raise my girl to be a camper,
I brought her up to wear sweet girlish clothes:
Who dares to place a pack upon her shoulders
And sneakers on her dainty little toes?"

she carolled, in the character of an anxious mother. It was one of the girls' favorite hiking songs. They had liked the tune of "I didn't raise my boy to be a soldier" very well, but, believing in preparedness, had objected to the words. So Marie Hunter, the only intellectual member of Camp Karonya, had been given orders to make up pleasant and appropriate words for the music, and this was the result. As Louise came to the end of the chorus the others joined in:

"A few more weeks in camp
Would make her quite a tramp——
I didn't raise my girl to be a ca-a-amper!"

Digitized by Google

Hike, the Camp Cat—this was his official name—trotted over the grass, waving his Maltese tail happily. He had the impression that something was going on.

Helen picked him up.

"What are you going to do with Hike, Winnie?" she inquired.

"Florence and I will take turns carrying him in our packs, of course," Winona answered, speaking for herself and her little sister.

"Well, I think a cat of that name who can't hike is a fraud," stated Louise.

"He might get lost if I let him," objected Winona anxiously. "He can, perfectly well."

Winona had an especial weakness for cats. She had rescued this kitten from an unhappy lot on her way up to camp, early in the summer. She was so deeply attached to him that the girls accused her of taking walks with him on a string. "Vicky wanted him," she went on, "but I don't feel as if I could trust a valuable pussy-cat in the house with her brother Lance. You don't know what a boy with an artistic temperament like that mightn't do to a cat."

"Boys don't need artistic temperaments to do things to cats," said Louise, who had small brothers of her own.

The Vicky Winona spoke of, with her brother Lance and her little sister Sandy, lived in a very beau-

Digitized by Google

tiful house a few miles from the girls' summer camp, with a dreamy artist uncle for their sole guardian, and they mostly brought themselves up. Latterly the Camp Fire Girls had been helping a little, with the result that Sandy, the little sister, wore respectable clothes on her walks abroad, and Vicky herself had taken to ginghams for everyday wear, instead of soiled taffeta frocks. But so far the reformation had not spread to Lance, who was almost too handsome to live, and had the worst manners that ever were.

"The Vicky family is thinking of coming down to our village to live this winter," said Louise, "that is, if the children can manage it."

"Then they will," said Winona. "Oh dear, I wonder what the Scouts are doing? It will be nice to be in the same town with the boys again."

"Oh, they're having a very good time without our help," answered Louise cheerfully. "Boys always do."

By this time the girls had fallen into step and were on their way to the village. The storekeeper from whom they purchased twine was very sorry to see them go, and they had the comfortable feeling that they were going to be pleasantly missed by the village. For the past six weeks Camp Karonya had been a pleasant incident in the village life, for the girls were all cheerful and polite, and had spent a large part of their pocket-money in the place.

Digitized by Google

"I declare, I shall certainly miss Mr. Cranch," sighed Winona, as they left the village store.

"And the twins! I shall miss the twins dreadfully," added Louise, and they both laughed.

The twins in question were Mr. Cranch's sons, two handsome lads of eighteen whom nobody could tell apart. They were usually to be found paddling up and down the river, clad simply in bathing-suits with trousers over them. They had always been as nice to the Camp Fire Girls as shyness permitted, and Louise had taken especial pleasure in teasing them.

"*Do* you remember the night they came to our dance, all beautifully dressed?" gurgled Louise.

"They did look nice," Winona answered reminiscently. "Mark had on his socks and pumps and everything."

"Till he got warm with dancing, and danced in his evening trousers and bathing-jersey!" Helen reminded her.

"Well, he was dressed up still, for him," defended Louise. "He kept his pumps on!"

"The twins will miss *us*, too," mused Winona. "There was scarcely a day that they didn't drop in with a wet Blue Bird or so they'd fished out of the lake."

"It was like the Indian's course dinner of six

Digitized by Google

courses—all succotash," Louise answered. "It was almost always your sister Florence who fell in."

"Florence *will* be less trouble at home," her sister admitted. "Do you know, girls, anybody as sure she's right as Florence is, and as good as little Frances Hughes, would be a wonderful person."

"I don't know," said Louise dubiously. "'I don't seem to feel fur her,' as Mr. Cranch says."

They were back at camp again by now, where everyone was bustling about, ready for the hike back home that afternoon.

"Strike your tents, girls!" called Mrs. Bryan, who was their guardian and Helen's stepmother. "We start at three this afternoon."

The big delivery wagon which Louise Lane's father had loaned the girls for their return trip was waiting, ready to be loaded with tents and cots. Nearly all the other girls had struck their tents and lashed them into place. Winona, Helen and Louise made haste to do so, too, and it was not long before the last cot was laid in its place and the last tent down. Nothing remained to show that Camp Karonya had spent six busy, happy weeks there but the trampled paths up and down where the line of tents had been, and the site of the ceremonial fires.

When the last bit of "striking camp" had been done Mrs. Bryan blew the little whistle which she used

Digitized by Google

to call the girls, and they all trooped together; the Camp Fire Girls, their little sisters the Blue Birds, Winona's dog Puppums, and the Maltese kitten, Hike. The animals knew the whistle as well as the girls, for among other things it had meant mealtimes to them for the past six weeks. Then they fell into line in orderly fashion (the girls, not the animals), Mrs. Bryan at their head, and started down the road, singing as they went. They broke the journey at the same farmhouse where, six weeks earlier, they had stayed over night on their trip to camp. Next day saw the campers back in their own home town, dusty and much browner than they had been when they went singing away, but hard as nails physically, and cheerfully ready for the work of the autumn and winter.

A pleasant surprise awaited them. The Scouts, who had been camping near them until two weeks before, and had shared most of their fun all summer, were lined up at the entrance of the town, ready to escort them in with fife and drum. Even the most lagging feet quickened at the drum-beat.

"I don't wonder men want to go and be soldiers," whispered little Florence Merriam to her sister. "I would, too, if I could march to a drum all day long!"

"That isn't all there is to it," Winona answered soberly, for she had been thinking a good deal about the war.

Digitized by Google

"I know," answered Florence importantly, "there's First Aid, and nursing. Do you know, Winona, Lucy and Frances and I have a wonderful plan; we're going —oh, I forgot!"

Florence put her little brown hand over her own mouth like an extinguisher.

Winona looked at her little sister in some alarm. There was never any knowing what Florence would do next, for besides being a born planner she was a born leader, and, as Louise had said, was always very sure she was right: a combination which made her brother and sister keep an eye on her most of the time. What the child said sounded like a wild plan for going off to be Red Cross nurses, but after a moment's thought Winona dismissed that idea as too impossible for even Florence to contemplate. They were more likely planning for the far future, in the calm belief that the war would last forever.

About that time the ranks broke, so Winona and Florence greeted their brother, and the Merriam family went home.

"Whose idea was it, your coming out to meet us?" asked Winona. "It was lovely."

"Billy Lee suggested it, I think," Tom answered her. "A lot of us boys have sisters and things in the Camp Fire, and you all did a lot of nice things for us up at camp. It seemed only polite."

Digitized by Google

Winona's eyes shone. Billy Lee was, next to her brother, her best boy friend. "Billy certainly does think of nice things to do," she said.

"I hear something mighty nice happened to you up at camp," was Tom's next remark.

Winona looked at him with surprise. "Why, Tommy, how did you hear it already?"

Tom grinned.

"Everybody knew it but you," he said. "You see, mother and Florence kept tabs on everything you did, till life was just one long notebook of your virtues. I couldn't help knowing about the things you did at home that helped you qualify. There was the story-hour with the children, you know, going on right under my nose, and, naturally, I could see you doing the housework while mother was sick, and helping the Porch Club have its meetings. And mother never missed a thing. So whenever you were out of the way they used to count up how many honors you were getting in addition to what you'd had before you had to leave the girls and come home. I wrote to your Guardian about it once for her, too. We're quite proud of you, Winnie."

"I certainly have a nice, kind family!" said Winona gratefully, slipping one arm through Florence's and one through Tom's. "And to think I never dreamed they were going to make me Torchbearer at

Digitized by Google

all! . . . They're going to make Marie one at the next ceremonial meeting."

"Let's see the pin," was Tom's answer.

She took it off and showed it to him.

"Usually you have to get your own pin and your own honor beads," she told him, "but they had mine all ready for me when I got there, because they wanted to make it a special surprise."

When they reached the house their mother ran out and had to be told all about it over again—how Winona had been given the highest rank in the Camp Fire without knowing that she was anywhere near it, and how glad everybody was of it, and how many new plans there were for the fall and winter months. "Louise's father is going to give her a little runabout as soon as she learns how to run it," said Winona. "And she's going to teach me as soon as she knows, and then we're going to teach all the other girls. You never know when it's going to be handy to know how to run an automobile."

"Yes," Florence broke in, "if you were at the front with the Red Cross you have to know how, don't you? I think the Blue Birds ought to be shown how, as well as the big girls."

"Well, when you're older," said Winona soothingly, as big sisters do. "Mother, Florence has Red Cross on the brain."

Digitized by Google

"First Aid is a good thing to learn," said their mother. "You are all supposed to know how, aren't you?"

"Yes; especially as we've decided to specialize on Home Craft," Winona answered. "But I suppose a little more practice wouldn't hurt any of us. I'll speak to the girls about it."

But the first of the next week school began, and for two or three days there was no time for Camp Fire work of any kind. Settling down into a new grade is an engrossing thing until one is thoroughly settled. Winona, Marie Hunter, Helen Bryan and Edith Hillis had come through their examinations with flying colors, but Louise Lane was conditioned in algebra, and Adelaide, changing from another school, had some work to make up. Altogether one heard very little of anything but school work and classes.

So that enterprising young person, Florence Merriam, was nearly forgotten by her elders till Saturday. That day Marie, who was in charge of the Blue Birds, decided to have an informal round-up of her little lambs. All went well until she reached the point of telephoning Louise Lane's house to reach Louise's younger sister Bessie. Louise answered the telephone.

"Is that you, Marie?" she asked. "What can I do for you—or are you about to kindly offer to come and do my algebra for me? Goodness knows I need it!"

Digitized by Google

"Not a bit of it," Marie answered heartlessly; for Marie's father was one of the professors in the high school, and mathematics came so easy to her that the girls accused her of having inherited her education. So she had little sympathy for people who couldn't do algebra, not knowing how it felt. "It's Bessie I want. I'm having a meeting of the Blue Birds. I intend to keep them meeting rather oftener than we do, because they're younger, and may lose interest if the meetings come at longer intervals. Will you put her on the wire, please?"

"I would with the greatest pleasure, but she isn't here to put," her sister replied. "I heard Frances Hughes hoo-hooing for her just after luncheon, and she tore out as if she had to catch a train; and she hasn't been seen since."

"That's queer," answered Marie, "because Frances isn't at her house, either. I just saw Adelaide, and she said that she hadn't the remotest idea where her sister was."

"Try Winona Merriam's," advised Louise. "Florence runs most of the Blue Birds, I'm sorry to say, because you never know what she's going to have them do next."

So Marie wearily called up Winona.

"Yes, indeed," Winona's laughing voice came back. "Your Blue Bird Meeting is all ready for you, self-

Digitized by Google

acting. The whole crowd are up in Florence's room with the door locked. They have Puppums up there, and goodness knows what they're doing to him—but he doesn't like it, because I can tell by the way he barks. Want to come over and get them?"

"Well, I don't want to interfere with their fun," answered Marie consideringly, "but there are some arrangements I want to make with them, about their meetings and so forth. And as long as the whole Nest is rounded up so neatly it seems too good a chance to lose. I'll come over to see you, Winnie, and bring you a basket of pears somebody just gave me. Then we'll go up and see the Birds. They can't feel that we're breaking in on their private affairs if we come *dona ferentes.*"

"I quite agree with you, if that means bringing them things to eat," said Winona cheerfully.

"It's in the Iliad, silly," said the scholarly Marie: and went to get the pears.

She appeared at the Merriam house, accordingly, with her gifts, and the two girls stayed talking a little while downstairs before they went up to storm Florence's castle. In fact, she and Winona ate several pears themselves, and talked over a great many things, before they attempted to see the Blue Birds.

Upstairs, laden with their basket, they were halted by Bessie Lane.

Digitized by Google

"Nature of your business, please," she said severely; but she looked hungrily at the pears.

"We've come to bring provisions to the garrison," said Marie soberly. "I had a basket of pears given me, and Winona said you Blue Birds were up here. So I came to bring you some."

"Oh, you darling!" cried Bessie, forgetting her martial duties and flinging her arms around Marie. "Can I have some?"

"Why, of course you may, dear," Marie answered. "I brought them for my Blue Birds."

Bessie pounded on the door.

"Oh, girls, here's Marie with pears for us!" she called. "A whole basket of pears!"

The door flew open so promptly that Marie and Winona had only time to notice that a placard had been pinned to it, which said in wobbly letters:

ImporTanT BusineSs beInG DOnE HeRe.
NO adMitanSe.

Marie walked in matter-of-coursely with her basket, and was engulfed in small girls on the spot. She had had the charge of them all the time they were up at camp, and they were very fond of her. Everybody dropped work and began to eat pears; even Puppums came over, dragging a thick rope, and begged for some. Marie gave him some milk-chocolate which she hap-

Digitized by Google

pened to have in her pocket, and everybody sat on the floor camp-fashion and was happy.

Presently, when enough pears had been eaten, Florence and Frances began to whisper together in a corner. Then they came over to the group again.

"Please, Marie," began Frances, who generally did the asking, after having been told what to say by Florence, "could you help us in a little sewing we're trying to do?"

"Why, of course I could," Marie answered. "What can I show you, Birds dear?"

"Well," Florence took it up, as Frances hung back, and the other little girls looked on expectantly, "the fact is, we're trying to make ourselves a sort of uniform. We call ourselves——"

But here the other girls began to sh-sh- violently, and so Florence stopped and commenced again.

"The uniform is a white waist and skirt, and a flowing thing over the head, like the Russian Red Cross nurses wear. We think that's the prettiest. But we can't get the head thing right. Can you show us?"

Florence dragged forward a bolt of white sheeting, which had been cut into unsuccessfully by several pairs of manicure scissors, and offered it to Marie.

"You'd better run downstairs and borrow mother's shears, Florence," Winona suggested. "Tell her I told you to, and that Marie's going to use them."

Digitized by Google

So Florence sped down after the shears. When she returned Marie cut out flowing Red Cross head-dresses for the whole nest of Blue Birds, who came up one after another to be fitted. She pinned them into place, and showed them how to take the few necessary stitches to hold them there.

"Now could you cut us out aprons and cuffs too?" begged Florence.

Marie went obediently on, and cut and pinned a complete outfit for each little girl. Winona, meanwhile, had picked up one of the less impossible pairs of scissors and was making Red Cross armlets out of some turkey red calico and sheeting that lay in another corner. She pinned and arranged these, too, for the Blue Birds to work on.

"What's it all for, Birdies?" asked Marie in an off-hand way, while she was showing them how to put the bands on the aprons. "And why on earth don't you take it outdoors to do? This is too nice a day to waste upstairs in a bedroom."

"We might, now it's all cut out," answered Bessie. "Shall we, girls?"

"All rights, let's," they agreed.

"And we can practise Puppums better outdoors, too," suggested a younger and less discreet Blue Bird.

"Practise Puppums!" echoed Winona, beginning to laugh, as she and Marie headed the procession down-

Digitized by Google

stairs and out into the back yard. "Are you trying to teach that dog tricks? Why, Florence Merriam, you know he never could learn but one trick, and he wouldn't do that till he saw the dog next door doing it and getting candy for it."

"I don't care," said Florence obstinately. "He'll have to learn this one. It isn't hard."

"Go ahead and make him do it, then," encouraged Marie, sitting down on the bottom step of the back porch, and going on with the arrangement of the uniforms.

So Puppums, who had been lying on a corner of Winona's skirt, rolling his eyes occasionally at the Blue Birds in a worried way, was dragged from his shelter and offered the rope again.

He did not seem at all interested in it, which was hardly strange, as he was about fox-terrier size and the rope nearly a cable. It was proved afterwards to have been somebody's discarded well-sweep.

After they had tried in vain for some time to make him take it, Florence looped it into a running noose and poked it into his mouth. She held it there while another Blue Bird tried to make him jump over the back of a chair which they had procured from the kitchen for the purpose. As Florence, to keep the rope in position, had to jump too, this last was not very successful. Finally two Blue Birds got hold of a hind

Digitized by Google

leg each and *tipped* him over the chair-back. By this time he was so disgusted by all that was being done to him, and especially by the fact that Winona, who usually rescued him from troubles like these, wasn't doing anything for him, that he gave one wild and successful bound over the chair, then over the back fence: and disappeared, rope and all, down the alley.

"Oh, that's splendid! That's wonderful! We said he'd do it, didn't we!" chorused the gratified Blue Birds.

"Yes, and when you hurt his feelings that way he always stays away for at least a day," Winona reminded her sister. This caused consternation in the Blue Bird ranks.

"Oh, and we forgot to have somebody out in the alley to be a wounded soldier for him to carry the rope to!" explained Bessie regretfully.

"You can't teach a dog all of a trick at once," said Florence loftily. "We'll practise him on the wounded soldier end of it Monday, when he's rested."

"Oh," said Winona, "I begin to see now. That's a very nice idea, children, but I think it has to be a special breed of dog."

"That doesn't matter a bit," explained Florence. "You know Tom says Puppums has some of every kind of dog there is in him, so there's prob'ly enough Red Cross dog to be useful that way."

Digitized by Google

"I don't know about the Red, but he was certainly cross when he left," said Marie, beginning to giggle.

Florence, seeing that nobody seemed to object, sat down and began to explain as she sewed.

"You see, the Red Cross dog crouches in the trenches. Then you give him a rope with a noose on the end, and he takes it in his mouth and bounds out, and hunts till he finds a wounded soldier. Then he slips the noose round the soldier, and runs back, and the people in the trenches pull the rope and get their soldier back again."

"One soldier to the good," said Marie rather flippantly for a mistress of Blue Birds.

"Yes," answered Florence eagerly, "and we are going to train Puppums to do all that. It won't be hard."

Winona privately thought that it would be hard, but said nothing. Only experience showed Florence things.

Meanwhile, Marie decided to strike while the iron was hot.

"Girls," she asked, "how would you like to have some more First Aid lessons? I think the school nurse would be glad to show us all, Camp Fire Girls and Blue Birds, more about it. We know enough to pass our tests, but I think we ought to practise till we can do any kind of First Aid, any time, and even a little about nursing."

Digitized by Google

Never was a suggestion greeted with more enthusiasm. The Blue Birds fairly mobbed Marie.

"And could you help us have a meeting to sew our uniforms, and a meeting for First Aid, too, every week?" they demanded.

This was a good deal of time to ask Marie to give, for she had her school work to do, and did her own sewing as well. She looked a little doubtful.

"I'll look after the sewing afternoon," volunteered Winona. "And maybe you won't have to put much time on the First Aid, Marie, if Miss Robertson shows us. Indeed, I don't see why Camp Karonya shouldn't have all its lessons together."

"We can tie each other up," suggested Florence, laughing.

So it was settled. Puppums, by the way, came back Sunday afternoon, still haughty, although fairly forgiving. But he would not look at a rope of any kind for a year.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER TWO

THE First Aid classes went on prosperously for two weeks. So did the Blue Birds' sewing classes. Indeed, the Blue Birds were such little angels that such of the Camp Fire Girls as were elder sisters began to wonder just what was the matter. But seven Blue Birds went on being angelic, and after a while even Louise, who was very skeptical, began to attribute it all to the uplifting influence of Camp Fire.

Then the blow fell.

It was Saturday afternoon again, and all the Red Cross uniforms had been completed. The little girls had worked zealously over their First Aid, and even requested to be taught to cook. And still their families had suspected nothing—not even when Florence Merriam's pig savings-bank disappeared from its shelf, and Winona, comparing notes with Louise, found that Bessie Lane's dime bank was also gone. Things generally swept the little girls at the same time. The elder sisters merely wondered dimly what the children were going to buy, and thought no more about it.

Then Winona, coming home, was greeted with:

"Winnie, dear, where's Florence?"

Winona stopped short in the doorway, swinging her tennis racquet.

Digitized by Google

"Why, mother dear, I haven't any idea. I thought she was here, but I haven't seen her since early morning."

"Call up the other girls, will you, please, and see if you can find out?" asked Mrs. Merriam.

So Winona went to the telephone, and called up successively Louise Lane, Adelaide Hughes, and all the other girls who had little sisters. She turned from the telephone with a startled face.

"Mother, not only do none of the girls know where Florence is, but their little sisters are gone, too. Edith Hillis says she was just on the point of asking me if I would send Lucy home. Every one of those little imps has been gone since early morning."

"I suppose it's a picnic," said Mrs. Merriam. "Queer, though, that a staid little soul like Lucy shouldn't tell her people where she was going. It isn't so surprising in Florence."

"I'll go upstairs and see what she's taken," offered Winona. "If the big basket is gone from its nail in her room that means a picnic. If she'd told me I'd have fixed her some lunch."

Winona raced upstairs to investigate.

Not only was the basket gone from Florence's room, but all her bureau drawers were wide open and tossed over. Winona was moved to see what was gone. One change of underwear—the best and most ribbony—had

Digitized by Google

been taken, Florence's white shoes and stockings, including her only silk pair, and two little white skirts and shirtwaists that were the pride of her heart. And also—Winona noticed it last—the Red Cross outfit was gone.

"Good gracious!" said Winona to herself, "they wouldn't be such little geese!"

Nevertheless, she went down to tell her mother the news with some misgivings.

"And had she said anything about running away to be a nurse before?" Mrs. Merriam asked when Winona had told her all she thought and feared.

"Not straight out," admitted Winona, "but these uniforms, and their being gone, and the banks being gone—it looks as if they were doing something they shouldn't anyhow!"

"I always have had to manage Florence on the principle of 'see what Master Johnny's doing and tell him to stop,'" sighed Mrs. Merriam. "But I don't think at the worst the children can have gone very far."

She went to the telephone herself this time, and talked to the mothers. They agreed with her that the children were evidently on the way to do something they shouldn't. Mrs. Hillis, indeed, was terrified to the last degree, and Winona suspected that her own mother was not so calm as she seemed.

"Why shouldn't we girls go and look for them,

Digitized by Google

mother?" she asked. "We know something about hunting for people."

"Go and look for them!" said Mrs. Merriam, "I should think you would—and everybody else, too! I'm going to call up Mr. Gedney and set the Scouts at work, and if those children aren't found by nightfall I'll notify the police. Nobody knows what may have happened if it's what you think."

"I'm sorry I frightened you, mother," said Winona. "They may have just gone for a little picnic."

But Edith Hillis, tearing over with her yellow hair streaming behind her, and a frightened look on her usually placid pink-and-white face, settled that idea.

"Here's a note Lucy left behind, Mrs. Merriam," she panted. "Winona's right. The little imps *have* gone off in a body."

Mrs. Merriam took the note and read it aloud to Winona.

"Dearest mother" (wrote little Lucy, who was always a careful child): "We are going to the trenches to be Child Red Cross Nurses. We are taking thirteen dollars out of all our banks, so we will have plentie of Munney. Puppums is going to. He is to be a Red Cross Dogg. I will com back soon with suvveners. Your loving little daughter, Lucy."

Mrs. Merriam caught her breath. Then the sense of humor that always did come to the rescue of the

Digitized by Google

Merriam family caught her, and she began to laugh, even as she went to the phone again to get police headquarters.

"If they've walked it will be an easy matter to overtake them," she said when she had finished with the telephone. "If they've taken the train the station-master would be sure to remember a crew like that. Talk about the horrors of war!"

Within a half hour the police, the Scouts and all the Camp Fire Girls were out on the track of the ambitious Child Red Cross Nurses. They had not gone by train, it appeared from the station-master; neither had they taken the trolley, for Mrs. Merriam telephoned promptly to the car-barn, and the people there called up the trolley station where they would have had to change. The Scouts and Camp Fire Girls went at Scout pace, which covers twelve miles an hour, down every path and road leading from the village, on the idea that the children might have walked. But they had disappeared as completely as if the earth had swallowed them up.

At nightfall the search-parties met again at the schoolhouse.

There was no trace of the children.

"It's dark—and what can have happened to them?" said Mrs. Lane, despondently, though she generally looked on the bright side of things. "It seems

Digitized by Google

incredible that seven little girls and a dog should leave no trace anywhere. Do you suppose gypsies——"

"I hope not," said Mrs. Merriam, looking as if she wished the thought hadn't occurred to Mrs. Lane. "The gypsies wouldn't want so many children, surely. But oh, my poor, little, naughty girl, out all night!"

She shivered at the thought, and Winona, who was hovering in the background with her allies, Billy and Louise and Tom, caught her brother's hand tight. The Merriams looked at each other in dismay. They had not realized how fond they were of defiant, independent little Florence.

Suddenly Louise thought of something.

"Why shouldn't we go after them in the machine?" she offered. "I can run it, or you can, Billy. We can put on extra headlights and go very slowly. It will be something to do, anyway."

"I'll tell mother," said Winona.

Mrs. Merriam scarcely heard her.

"Yes, yes, do anything," she said without paying attention.

"There's no use worrying them," Winona reported. They're all nearly wild about it. I think it's a safe enough thing to do."

So the four of them slipped out of the schoolhouse and went to Louise's home, where, in a garage at the foot of the garden, the runabout that was to come to

Digitized by Google

Louise when she had learned to manage it successfully was kept.

"Why, look!" exclaimed Louise, as Billy flung wide the door of the garage. "Where's the car?"

For, as they held up the lanterns they had been carrying on their search, they saw that the big roadster was gone.

They were silent for a moment, and then Billy voiced the thought that came to all of them.

"Could any of those kids run a car?" he demanded.

"Why, no," said Winona."

"Wait a minute," corrected Louise. "I'm not so sure of that. Bessie has been watching me, going out every time I had my lessons with father, and sometimes father has let her have the wheel herself. And now I come to think of it, I'm certain she's the one that's been taking out the runabout to practise on. It's been muddier than we could account for, and father thought one of his delivery men had been borrowing it on the sly."

"It's a long chance," said Billy Lee, "but we mustn't pass it up. I can run this make of car, Louise. One of you girls can sit by me and one can sit on the floor. Tommy, you hang on at the back. All get your lanterns."

Billy Lee was a quiet lad, but when he took command of things people generally obeyed, because they were pretty sure he knew exactly what he was doing.

Digitized by Google

This occasion was no exception to the rule. Louise and Winona got obediently in, Winona beside him, Louise on the floor and Tom hung on behind. Each had a big lantern, beside the little flashlights they all always carried.

"They'd be likely to take the state road, if they were going to Europe," said Billy; and nobody stopped to think how funny it sounded. They stopped talking as the little runabout slid slowly over the roads. Once outside the village they went slower still.

"Nobody's thought to look for an automobile," said Tom.

"We had better look for a broken-down one," Billy answered grimly. "Those kids couldn't navigate it far without some sort of an accident."

Winona clutched his arm—the one that was not doing the steering—in an agony of terror.

"Oh, Billy, do you think——" she asked, and caught her breath.

"There's no use doing any thinking," Billy answered her more gently. "If anything much has happened they've been picked up by now anyhow and straightened out. Even a pack of small girls would know they'd better not steer fast till the driver knew a little more."

Nothing more was said. Only the boys looked up and down the roadside carefully, stopping every little

Digitized by Google

while, to make excursions down side roads, and anywhere that an automobile could have hidden.

Presently Winona touched Billy's arm again.

"Billy," she suggested, "do you think they could have gone anywhere near Old Mary's cabin? That's not far from this road, only about a mile and a half further on."

"We'll try it," said Billy.

But Old Mary knew nothing. She had been visited earlier in the day by the Scouts, and had since hunted for the children herself. But she had a good suggestion to make.

"If it's an automobile they're in, sure they'd have gone beyont the circle the rest of yez have hunted in," she said. "Go on up the road four or five miles more—as far as ye'd think they'd be like to go—and then hunt backwards. And have a sup of tea before ye go—it's weary work huntin' on an empty stummick."

Things did look brighter after the quartet had had tea and some buttered toast which Mary insisted on making for them. Then they started off again, acting upon her suggestion. They went quickly on for about eight miles, then turned the car around and came slowly back in the direction of home. The road in these parts had little clusters of woodland along its edge, and one of the boys searched each of these, the other taking turns to remain in the car. They were still about ten

Digitized by Google

miles from home when Winona, who had been watching the ground intently for wheelmarks, uttered a cry.

"Oh, look!" she said. "Isn't that the track of an automobile that's turned off?"

Billy stopped the car and they all sprang out, kneeling at the side of the road and looking.

"Yes, it is," announced Tom and Billy in a breath.

"And it goes on into the wood-path," Winona went on.

"Well, what man has done man can do," said Billy cheerfully. "If nobody minds we'll go on into the wood in this car."

There was a track broken by the passage of a larger car, and the runabout had no difficulty in making its way in. They went very slowly, and the machine, being an electric, and nearly noiseless, they were soon upon the big car without disturbing any of its occupants. They had guessed right. The enterprising Child Red Cross Nurses had commandeered the big Lane roadster for their journey to Europe, and had come to grief about ten miles from home.

The four in the runabout were out in an instant, and hurrying over to see if any damage had been done. Winona held her breath in terror as she and Louise turned their flashlights on the sleeping children. Supposing it was Florence who was hurt, or——"

Digitized by Google

" 'Tisn't time to get up yet," drawled Lucy's sleepy voice.

The others slept on. It had been an exciting day.

Winona bent over the Nest—literally a nest, for they had turned over the front seat, and all seven of the children were snuggled together, fast asleep in full regalia.

" It's quite time to wake up," she called in a voice that she tried to make as severe as possible.

Florence, at the familiar voice, blinked one eye, and then struggled to her feet. Then she struck out with both hands. It was a way she had if she was wakened too suddenly.

" Go 'way, enemy! " she said crossly.

It was doubtless a very important occasion, and Winona and the rest had been feeling very badly about the strayed lambs. But at being taken, as Florence was doubtless taking them, for a detachment of some foreign foe, the quartet shrieked with laughter. And that did finally waken the rest of the Blue Birds. Pup-pums—it is a pity, for the sake of his reputation as a watch-dog, to tell it—never waked at all. He wagged his tail in his sleep, opened one eye as Florence had done, and then shut it again.

" No use rousing them any more," said Tom philosophically. " Let's see what ails the car, Billy."

He and Billy picked up the Blue Birds in bunches

Digitized by Google

and put them, protesting, on the grass on laprobes, and started to investigate the machinery.

"What happened, children?" demanded Louise, seeing that the little girls were awake enough to speak.

Florence sat up and pushed back her flowing head-dress, which was rather mussed by having been slept in.

"Nothing happened," she said aggrievedly. "We were going on to-morrow morning if you hadn't come. What you want to interfere for?"

"Well," said Winona pacifically, "you see, it struck Louise and me that thirteen dollars wasn't enough to pay all your fares across the ocean. So we thought we'd try to catch up with you and tell you so."

"Do you mean to say they'd charge Red Cross people to go across?" demanded Florence. "I never heard of anything so mean."

"Well, volunteers, anyway," Winona assured her.

But here Tom broke in, and Florence shrank a little. Dealing with her elder brother was a rather different thing from dealing with gentle Winona, who always took the pleasant way if she could.

"You know perfectly well you young ones had no business running off," he said. "Your mothers have been nearly frantic. Everybody in town is hunting high and low. I hope you get thoroughly punished when you get home, every one of you. You for one, Florence, don't get the slingshot I promised you, and

Digitized by Google

if mother takes my advice you won't be allowed out of the yard for a month. You started this thing, and you know it."

But here a gentle voice broke in, the voice of Lucy Hillis, well known as the most obedient and wisest of the little girls.

"Oh, no," she said. "I started it, and planned all of it. Didn't I, girls?"

"Yes, Lucy did," the Blue Birds chorused, and Lucy sank back and seemed about to go to sleep again.

After that there was little to be said. For, if Lucy had started it, she had also given the clue that led to their being found. And just then Billy crawled out from under the machine and reported that the only thing that ailed it was having been stopped too suddenly, and that it would go all right now.

"How did it happen that none of you were hurt?" Louise found time to demand.

"Why should we be?" asked Bessie. "It just stopped with a little jerk. We were joggled a little, that was all. And it stopped in such a nice place we thought we might as well spend the night."

Billy took the front seat of the car now, transferring Florence to the runabout, and Louise took the runabout's wheel. The procession moved placidly down the road, back to town and the schoolhouse. Some of the children were crying by this time, but

Digitized by Google

Florence and Lucy refused to see anything but nobility in their quest, and were quite hurt that the others didn't agree with them.

There was a very exciting scene when the laden cars rolled up and Winona and Louise distributed the children. Some of the Scouts were still out hunting.

"What shall we do with those Blue Birds?" demanded Louise despairingly. "If it had been only one of them—but to go off in a body and be naughty!"

"Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do," quoted Mrs. Bryan. "I think we have all of us got to keep those Blue Birds so busy that they won't have time for naughtinesses."

"'You don't know Nellie as I do,'
Sang the cunning little bird on Nellie's hat,"

carolled Louise. I don't think they can be kept as busy as that."

Winona looked thoughtful.

"I read the other day in the paper that somebody says if we have enough pageants we won't want to go to war," she suggested.

Louise grinned.

"Seems like rather a mild substitute. Has the man that thought it out gone over and suggested it to the Germans?" she wanted to know.

Winona laughed too.

Digitized by Google

"Well, it mayn't do much good to the Germans. But I think it might help the Blue Birds. Let's have a meeting and talk it over. If they have enough rehearsals they may forget about the trenches."

"It'll be a long time before Puppums does," grinned Tom, as he picked up Florence and set her down again outside the door of the schoolhouse. He didn't seem to trust her to go about by herself. "Puppums says he doesn't like war a bit. Saw a rope just now in the corner and ran away howling. Poor old dog."

But as Louise and Winona walked toward home with Mrs. Bryan they talked over the pageant idea again, and it seemed to them that it might be a good idea.

"We'll get all the Camp Fire Girls to help, and——"

"If it's a pageant you'll need all the girls and boys in school, and likely a good many grown people into the bargain," Mrs. Bryan reminded them. "And it's a lot of work, my children. Better be sure you know what you're doing before you start."

"We'll have to wait till the school year is comfortably started," considered Winona. "Then we can begin."

"Who'll write it?" Louise, always practical, wanted to know.

"I should think we could meet and plan it out together," said Winona. "Then we can put it down,

Digitized by Google

rather than write it. Marie will know something about it."

"Your ideas are always good, Winona," said Mrs. Bryan. "Have you any about this subject?"

"I should think it ought to have something to do with our own town—and something to do with Camp Fire Girls—and something to do with history," returned Winona slowly. "And pageants always have lots of beautiful dances, and costumes and costumes. You're right, Mrs. Bryan. There will be a lot of work connected with it, and a great deal of rehearsing. And by the time that's all done it will be too late to have it outdoors."

"Does it have to be outdoors?" Louise wanted to know. "You always get rained on."

"It's better," said Winona, "at least, I should think you could have more space, and a prettier background."

"Well, we'll call a meeting," promised Mrs. Bryan. "And we can decide about the outdoors part of it then."

And so ended a very exciting Saturday.

The meeting was called for the middle of the next week. Before it convened a new Blue Bird was added to the Camp Fire. Louise, Helen and Winona, coming from school Monday afternoon, were met by a small boy who waved his hand to them and called

"Hi, Vicky says to come over."

"I told you Vicky'd manage to get them here to

Digitized by Google

live," said Louise to Winona. "Where are you?" she called back to the small boy, who was Lance, Vicky's brother."

"The big house down on Jefferson Street," he called back to her, and ran along.

"Let's go see Vicky," suggested Louise. "That is, unless there's something else you have to do."

"Not a thing," answered Winona. "Come on."

Vicky Martin, with her younger brother and sister, Lance and Sandy, lived with a dreamy uncle who painted very beautifully, and, in streaks, successfully; and who knew rather less about bringing up children than his large Russian wolf-hound did. When he had sold a picture the children had a governess; when he hadn't they didn't. And what managing of the house was done, Vicky and the housekeeper of the moment did. As Vicky was not yet ten, and the other children younger, it was a rather wild household. They had lived in a very haphazard way in their summer home near Camp Karonya, and it had been all very well during the summer. But the girls were curious to see how their plan of living would work in town, in a house where there had to be fires and carpets.

"I wonder if Sandy has gotten over wanting to be ''dopted,' Louise laughed a little ruefully. In the previous summer she had, with Winona and the two boys, found Sandy in a very ragged state, and jumped

Digitized by Google

to the conclusion that she was an excellent subject for adoption—and tried to do it. The Camp hadn't allowed her to forget it for some time. Sandy herself had insisted that it was a legal adoption, and had been very hard to detach from Louise at the end of camp.

"I'll get Sandy yet," said she cheerfully. "Here, this must be the house. Yes . . . I can see Vicky's kimona in the front hall. Sure sign."

Before she could say any more, rapturous squeals from within the hall, whose door was open, greeted them, and Vicky and Sandy came tearing out to fall on the two girls bodily.

"You see we got here!" said Vicky triumphantly. "I just kept on at Uncle Will till he said he 'sposed there were as good views here as anywhere, and we might as well come."

Meanwhile little five-year-old Sandy had fastened on Louise and was pouring forth questions.

"Can't I live at your house now? Can't I come and stay with your folks? Have you got any presents for me? How are all the Camp Fire Girls? Where's Puppums? Why didn't you bring him, and some candy?"

Louise sat down on the floor and tried to explain to Sandy that she and Winona had not known they were coming till Lance called to them in the street. Winona bent and picked up the kimona and a few other

Digitized by Google

things that decorated the hall floor, and eyed Vicky reproachfully. That young person wriggled.

"Well, it's hard to be tidy when you've just moved in," she protested, "and besides we don't have any good example set us. Uncle Will's too untidy to live. Tell you what, Winona, why don't you and the other girls take turns coming over here and running things, week about? Then I could see how to be tidy. It's awful lonesome."

Winona considered that it must be lonesome. The children went where their uncle did, and he wandered like a gypsy. They never stayed long enough in one place to make friends or settle down.

"How long are you here for?" she asked.

"He's rented the house for all winter," Vicky answered. "I made him. I told him it was time I had a little education."

"You poor little thing! You do have to be grown-up for yourself!" said Winona. It was true. Vicky was very much older than her years in a good many ways, and very sensitive about her differences from other children. "I don't see why we couldn't do that, if our mothers are willing."

"Two of you at a time would be nice," suggested Vicky. "You and Louise to start off with."

"What would your uncle say?" Louise looked up from playing with Sandy to ask.

Digitized by Google

"Nothing. Honest, he'd never know the difference. And the housekeeper would like it. She says its gass—gassly or something, the way we young ones behave."

"I move we do it," said Louise, getting up, "if everybody gives their blessing."

And so it was arranged.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER THREE

EVERYBODY gave their blessing, and the next day but one Winona and Louise moved over to Vicky's house to commence the unique experiment of showing Vicky how to be a little girl.

"You can have any room you like," said Vicky, as she showed them the house. "There are lots more rooms than we need."

Winona viewed the house with a critic's eye, and decided that what she wanted was a room where she could keep her eye on Lance, who struck her as needing it. Louise's room opened off Sandy's—there was no question about that.

It was a lovely, large house, which Mr. Mitchell had rented ready furnished. It had a wide lower hall with a parquet floor, which Lance had already marked up with chalk for his marbles, sunny dining-room and living-room, and a smaller room off the living-room where the children used to dump things. Mr. Mitchell had appropriated a big bedroom with a skylight on the top floor, for his studio. Indeed the skylighted room had been his principal reason for taking the house.

The family had been there less than a week, but already the house looked like pandemonium. The housekeeper, a rather severe-looking elderly woman,

Digitized by Google

had seemed sad at the idea of more children coming in, but Winona took the bull by the horns and had a talk with her.

"Now, we haven't come to rampage," said she to the things the housekeeper was looking. "We've come to show Miss Vicky and Master Lance how to be a real family. I think you'll find things easier instead of harder. And if you don't, please tell us."

"Bless your heart!" said the softened housekeeper; "anybody as sweet as you look couldn't be any trouble. And if anybody can make that young pickle of a Lance behave I'll love 'em to the last day of my life."

Winona was so embarrassed at this open compliment that she didn't know what to say next. So she slid off to see Vicky again.

"Would you like to see my bureau drawers?" Vicky asked. "I read a book once about a little girl that went to boarding-school, and the first thing they did was to show her about her bureau drawers."

"Why, there's nothing to show about bureau drawers," answered Winona.

But Vicky persisted, throwing hers open for inspection.

"Here's where I keep my paper dolls," she said, "and here's where I keep the mending."

"You don't mean to say you do the meaning?" Winona asked.

Digitized by Google

"Of course I do!" answered Vicky. "The housekeepers come and go and come and go, and they're cross enough anyhow. You see, Lance keeps them upset."

Winona began to feel as if she was engaged in that time-honored pastime known as teaching your grandmother.

"I don't see why the housekeeper shouldn't do the mending," she said. "This one doesn't seem cross."

"Not yet," said Vicky darkly. "She's new. Wait till Lance has a temperament spell."

Just what a "temperament spell" might be, Winona hadn't much idea. It sounded to her like a fancy name for a temper fit, but she thought she would wait and see. She and Vicky went over the bureau drawers together, and she showed Vicky the beauty of collecting boxes and keeping things in them. The little girl proved to have a great many more of some things than she needed, and not any to speak of of some other things. There were thirty pairs of stockings, for instance, and only three petticoats. And the bureau drawers did need attention. Vicky's idea of putting things away was to roll them into little balls and poke them down tight.

When they had finished setting her room straight they went on to Sandy's. But Louise had been before them here, and she and Sandy were comfortably curled up telling each other fairy-tales, Sandy in what Vicky said was her last clean dress, and with her wonderful

Digitized by Google

mop of flossy yellow hair brushed out loose around her face.

In Lance's room an obstacle awaited them—Lance himself, no less. He was seated in the middle of the floor, looking very cross.

"I don't want you to come and tidy me," he announced. "I want to be left the way I am. I'm picteresque, and I like it."

"You may be picturesque, but you aren't a real family," answered Vicky severely. "Sandy and I are going to learn how to be like other people, and have nice times, and how will you feel when you aren't like anybody at all?"

Lance seemed a little worried by this.

"I will too be like people," he retorted. "I'll be like lots of people."

"You don't see anybody but us that's picturesque," said Vicky. "Do you want to go on being picturesque all your life?"

She seemed to think it was an awful fate, and it did move Lance.

"Well, what do you want me to do?" he asked.

"Let Winona and me tidy your room up, for one thing," she said.

"And play marbles on the pavement outside instead of on the parquet floor," suggested Winona. "Most boys like pavements better to play marbles."

Digitized by Google

"Do they?" said Lance. It seemed a new idea to him.

"You might try it once," suggested Winona.

"Well, just once," he said. But he got up, and went downstairs to try it, and they went over his drawers, too. Winona found enough mending to do here. Scarcely anything of Lance's but was in rags. She carried it down to the housekeeper.

"There's a lot of mending," she said, and that was all she did say, while Vicky stood by and listened.

"There certainly is," agreed the housekeeper. "It'll take me most of my evenings for a week, I can see that."

She was going to do it! Winona looked at Vicky, and Vicky clapped her hands.

"Oh, Winona, aren't you splendid!" she said.

"Mrs. Harrison is splendid, you mean," said Winona. "In a week you'll have all the clothes you want."

But Vicky was not to be moved. She was quite sure it was Winona who was to be thanked for the housekeeper's amiability.

"I wish I could do something for you," said she.

Winona thought a minute.

"Why, you could," she said. "Let the girls meet here next Thursday night. You have such a lovely big fireplace—that is, unless it will bother your uncle."

"Nothing bothers him," asserted Vicky. "He

Digitized by Google

don't know it's there, so it can't. I'd love to have the girls meet here. And I want to be a Blue Bird. I can, can't I?"

Winona put her arm around her. "Why, we'd love to have you," she said.

"That'll be more yet like the other girls," said Vicky soberly.

Winona, remembering the Blue Birds' last performance, secretly hoped that Vicky would not become quite like the others. She thought not; Vicky had a queer grown-upness in spots that might make the others do less wild things.

"There are a lot of things that I'd like the other girls to be like you in," she said.

Vicky beamed.

"Really, Winona?"

"Really," Winona smiled. "Now come on outdoors and let's see if there's time yet for tennis."

Outside, in the tennis court, Winona met the boys.

"What's this, I hear," asked Billy Lee, "about your going over to stay at Vicky's house? Why don't you come over to ours if you feel you have to scatter sunshine?"

"You don't need sunshine," retorted Winona. "I'll tell you what you do need, though, even though you mayn't know it."

"Well, go ahead," said Billy.

Digitized by Google

"You need a small boy named Lance Mitchell to tag around the Scouts a little, and get some ideas about it."

"Lance can't," began Billy, not displaying any enthusiasm. "You have to be past your twelfth birthday to be a Scout."

"I know that perfectly well," said Winona. "I don't want you to make a Scout of him. But I do think it would be a kind action, and a good turn, and all the rest of it, to give him a hint or so about behaving. All his uncle ever does is use the children for models, or give them money when they ask for it."

Billy grinned.

"And you want me to conduct a class in etiquette?"

"Something like that," said Winona, smiling too. "I don't know just how to say it. But there ought to be some way of getting it into Lance's head that once in a while it's nice to be obliging, and that politeness is a great comfort to the people you live with. And a few other things like that."

"I don't know just how to get about it," said Billy, "but I guess I'd be helping the neighbors if I made him a little more comfortable to live with. But—good gracious! I'm not a kid-reformer."

"Come over to-night, anyhow, you and Tom," suggested Winona. "Drop in casually, to see your dear friends the Camp Fire Girls. And you can look Lance

Digitized by Google

over and see if you want to help make home happy for Louise and me while we're there."

"Done!" said Billy promptly. "We'll come in full Scout regalia, if you think that will help impress your charges."

"I know it will," answered Winona.

"All right," he agreed. "See you later."

He strode off whistling, and Winona thought for the thousandth time what a comfort it was to have a chum like Billy, as dependable as the daylight. If Billy told you he was going to do a thing, you could be quite sure it was going to be done.

The first meal at Vicky's was rather an ordeal to Winona, though Louise didn't seem to mind, and mothered little Sandy as if she had owned her since childhood. To be sure Louise was the eldest of several children, and telling little girls what kind of table-manners to have was no new thing to her. Winona only had one sister, and Florence was near enough her own age not to have been mothered by her. "Uncle Will," the head of the house, spoke to the girls courteously, and conversed with them as if they were grown up all through the soup, and then sank into what seemed even to unobserving Louise an embarrassed silence. He was a tall man, with a drooping blond mustache, and a capacity for dreaming that was beyond anything they had ever seen. However, by the time they reached the

Digitized by Google

dessert the girls were comfortably sure that he had forgotten them, because he took to sketching on the table-cloth.

"There," said Vicky in a stricken tone, "I forgot."

"What did you forget?" asked Winona with some curiosity.

"I forgot to put paper over Uncle Will's place," said Vicky in a matter-of-fact tone. "He gets so upset if the table-cloth is washed after he does sketches on it, and it's awful to remember to save the table-cloths for him. The maids never will do it."

"Well, there," said Mrs. Harrison. "I'll see to all that, Vicky. By the way, is Vicky short for Victoria?"

Vicky, whose name was a sore point with her, colored painfully, and was about to answer, when, most unexpectedly, her uncle did. "Yes, it is," he said. "Victoria and Alexandra are the children's names. Their mother was English, and patriotic."

Vicky sat still in astonishment.

"Why—why—" she stammered, "the nurse always said it was Victrola—and everybody did. Why didn't you ever tell me before?"

"Victrola?" said Uncle Will, who really talked quite like other people when he was once awake. "What nonsense! That was only a nickname. Have you really always believed that, child?"

Vicky nodded. She was too near crying to speak.

Digitized by Google

"She always thought so, Mr. Mitchell," put in Winona. "She told me that she asked you if she had a middle name, and you said it was Janet, and she started to use it instead. Oh, I'm so glad!"

"So am I, if she always believed it," he said.

Just then there were footsteps heard on the porch, and the bell rang.

"Oh, that's Billy and Tom," said Winona. "You remember my brother and his chum, Mr. Mitchell. They said they were coming over to-night to see us. Will they be in your way on the porch?"

But Mr. Mitchell fled swiftly.

His going was really a relief. He was so frightened by people. Though he seemed like a very gentle, friendly person, Winona thought, if you could once get him used to you.

Lance, meanwhile, had edged up to the boys rather timidly. This was a surprise to Winona, who had never seen him with boys, as it happened, and thought he was as self-assured as possible no matter what happened. Billy and Tom appeared to take no notice of him. Presently he spoke to Tom, still with distinguished meekness.

"What are those medals you have on your uniform?"

"Merit badges," responded Tom shortly, and went on talking to Louise and Winona about something else.

Digitized by Google

"Oh," said Lance with a good deal of respect. He was quiet for a while longer.

"Is that a merit badge, too?" he asked, finally, touching one on Billy's coat.

"No," said Billy with quite as little apparent desire to spin out the conversation, "that's for shooting."

"Can I be a Scout when I get old enough?" persisted Lance. Billy saw his chance and took it.

"You'd have to start in now to be a mighty decent sort of person," said he. "Scouts have to be regular fellows."

"Oh," said Lance again. And that was all that passed between them. Lance stole away, and was found afterwards to have gone off to bed, all by himself.

The girls looked at one another wonderingly.

"Do you think——" began Winona.

"That's the only way to manage that type of kid," said Billy; and Tom seemed to agree with him. So they let it alone.

"What a good time we had in the roadster, after all, hunting those little imps of Blue Birds!" sighed Louise, putting her hands behind her head. "I almost wish they'd get lost all over again, so we'd have a chance to go hunting them."

"Why wait for the chance?" suggested Billy, "would your father trust us out in it, do you think, without somebody grown-up along? I'm a pretty care-

Digitized by Google

ful driver—we're none of us specially wild-eyed. Why not try?"

"Oh, splendid!" cried Louise. "I'll ask him. Maybe we could go next Saturday."

"And take luncheon," suggested Winona."

"It'll be almost like Camp Karonya again!" exclaimed Louise. "I'll ask father the very next time I see him."

So it was agreed. A long trip in the Lane automobile sounded like a particularly pleasant thing, and everybody felt contented.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER FOUR

THE next Thursday evening Camp Karonya met for the first time since they had returned from the woods. It was a particularly grand occasion, for not only was Marie Hunter made a Torch Bearer, but a new Camp Fire was organized. Marie's work with the Blue Birds in Camp, as well as the Patriotism and Home-craft honors she had accumulated during the summer, carried her triumphantly in. She was one of the oldest of the girls, and the most hard-working. She might well have resented the fact of Winona's admission to the rank before her, but, as their Guardian was wont to say thankfully, Camp Karonya's sky never had any clouds on it. In fact, "Karonya" means "sky," and the Karonya girls had all taken names which more or less were connected with it. They tried to live up to them, and succeeded very well. Winona's own name, which she had kept as a Camp Fire name because it was really Indian, and meant "Flashing Ray of Light," Helen's name meant "Night-Star." Louise's was Ishkoodah, or Comet, Marie was Shawondassee, or South Wind, and so on.

All the girls felt that Marie's admission to the Torch Bearer rank was exceedingly well deserved. Her Blue Birds were there, all seven of them, to show the things she had taught them and the things she had showed

Digitized by Google

them how to make. Mrs. Bryan, or Opeechee (she had called herself after the robin because she specialized on bird-study) recounted to them all that Marie had done during the summer, and Marie stood up quietly to receive her Torch-Bearer's pin, and recite the Torch-Bearer's Desire:

> The light which has been given to me
> I desire to pass undimmed to others.

Everybody sang her a cheer, and she sat down again, still quiet, but very pleased.

After that came the organization of the new Camp Fire. It should have come first, but a couple of the girls were late getting there.

Winona Merriam had spent part of the time when she was at home, and looking after her mother, in getting up a Porch Club, together with Billy Lee's sister Nataly, who had also left camp before the rest. The girls of the Porch Club had become interested enough in Camp Fire to want to be one, and they were organizing to-night, with the gymnasium teacher of the high school as their Guardian. They intended to specialize in Health Craft. Camp Karonya had drifted into specializing on Home Craft, so the two camps were not likely to copy each other slavishly.

The old Camp had planned a pretty ceremony to welcome the new one. They danced in a circle, single file, as Indians do, to the music of their drum, while

Digitized by Google

the new Camp Fire came in, one by one. As each girl came in she was caught by the Camp Fire girl nearest the door, and set in the circle, which danced once around her before leading her up to the two Guardians, who sat together, one at each end of the hearth-fire. When all of the girls of the new Camp Fire were in, and seated around the fire, Camp Karonya grouped itself behind its Guardian, and spoke the Indian word for welcome, "Kolah!" three times. After this Mrs. Bryan and Miss Dustin, the gymnasium teacher, asked the questions of the girls alternately. After they had each repeated the wish to become a Camp Fire Girl, and been received, the Karonya girls welcomed them in, and there was another ceremonial dance, this time of all the girls. And then Winona, this having been satisfactorily concluded, brought up the matter of the pageant.

"What kind of a pageant?" everybody wanted to know.

"Whatever kind we could do best," Winona answered. "We'd have to plan it ourselves, and write down what needed to be written. Camp Wah-wah-tay-see could help—we'd have to do it together. Would you be willing, girls?"

The girls of the new Camp, which had called itself Camp Wah-wah-tay-see, or Camp Firefly, as an allusion to their activity, and the flitting about and light-

Digitized by Google

shedding of the fireflies, said that they would not only be willing, but glad, to help all they could. Their Guardian, Miss Dustin, offered to plan and direct the processions and dances.

"But it is a great deal of work for us all to undertake," she warned them. "It would leave time for very little else. Especially as you are planning to do it without a professional director. Look before you leap, girls!"

"There are the costumes, too," Opeechee reminded them.

"There are costume books in the Public Library," said Winona undauntedly.

"We have the big "Racinet," that would carry us down almost to where we would need to go," said Marie thoughtfully.

"But could just the two Camp Fires carry it through alone?" one of the Wah-wah-tay-see girls wanted to know.

"We would have to interest the whole of the school, and especially the Scouts," said Mrs. Bryan.

"Well, why not?" said Louise. "I love interesting people in things! We could have a committee on costume and one on dances, and all take a lot of time to think what the pageant was to be about. But I'm talking as if it was really going to happen, and I didn't mean to."

Digitized by Google

"It sounds as if it would be a lovely thing to have happen," said Helen Bryan eagerly."

"Miss Dustin and Mrs. Bryan—I beg their pardon, but it's hard to remember sometimes—Nah-Dees-Kah and Opeechee—seem to think there are drawbacks," objected Marie.

"Not quite drawbacks," said Mrs. Bryan. "But it is a great deal of work, and it couldn't be held outdoors by the time we were ready to give it. Remember, this is the latter part of September, and the weather is not going to be like this two months from now."

"Well, we can think it over," said Miss Dustin. Then all the girls sang "Lay me to sleep in Sheltering Flame," because it was getting late, and after they had ceremonially extinguished the fire the Council Fire was over.

The next night, however, Camp Karonya gathered again, only semi-officially, at Vicky's house, and went on talking about it.

"We could give it on a platform built across one end of the school assembly room," offered Helen. "The room would hold two hundred people, besides us. And we could have it night after night, till everyone who wanted to had seen it."

"Oh, yes, and perhaps we could give it again when spring comes," suggested Adelaide Hughes."

"That would be fine!" said everybody.

Digitized by Google

"Well, Opeechee," said Helen to her stepmother, "what do you really think? Are the difficulties really so great?"

"Only the amount of work you are taking on yourselves," said the Guardian, "because, my dears, if you start all this for the honor of the Camp Fire you mustn't let it slump in the middle. You'll have to put it through if you die in the attempt, and the whole of Camp Karonya is buried in one grave."

"With 'They done noble' over them," added Louise frivolously. "Well, I don't mind dying of hard work one bit. It would be a new way to die, anyway. And Miss Dustin seemed to think it was all right. She's always saying that her classes don't do enough practising, or have enough interest in physical culture. She thinks you ought to spend every waking moment physical culturing."

She got no sympathy from Opeechee.

"It's a fine idea," said Mrs. Bryan heartlessly. "Exercise is good for you."

"It would be a fine idea," sighed Louise "if all the other teachers didn't have the same idea about all their work, too. If I lived only to make my teachers happy I'd have to turn into octuplets. Eight little Louises—isn't it a nice idea?"

"Cease this frivolous conversation," said Marie, whose father was a professor; and she dropped on

Digitized by Google

Louise so neatly that the two rolled over and over for a minute.

That stopped discussion till the two were pried apart. It was a method of argument that survived from the summer camp, where if you could roll your opponent down a nice soft hill carpeted with pine-needles you had gained a signal victory.

"But about composing the Pageant," resumed Marie when she had her breath, pinned her braids into position again, and was sitting up once more by the fire-place, looking every inch a dignified professor's daughter. "You know, that isn't a specially simple thing, either. Pageants go on forever and ever. And every one of you dear little Camp Firers have gotten into a way of saying "Oh, Marie'll write it," no matter what it is. If there had to be another Declaration of Independence I suppose the very same thing would happen."

"Of course it would, and you'd go and do a beautiful one for us when you'd stopped growling," said Helen sweetly.

"That may all be," said Marie, not at all deceived by the compliment, "but I won't write a pageant all by my lonesome. We'll have to work out the idea all together, and then collaborate. Maybe each of us might take a period."

"What do you mean by a period?" asked Louise.

Digitized by Google

"Well, isn't it going to be historical?" asked Marie. "I thought they always were."

"Not always," said Mrs. Bryan. "There ought to be some history in it, no matter what it is about. But it might be a series of related scenes that illustrate one specific theme,——"

"Oh, I know!" exclaimed Winona, "like the growth of education, or——"

"Oh, no," protested Louise. Not the growth of education. I don't see any call we have to celebrate it. Besides, I don't see how you'd manage it."

"Make one education grow where two did before," answered Winona frivolously. "Besides, I didn't mean that we had to have that. That was just one that somebody had somewhere else. And another one was the progress of liberty. I've been reading up."

"Oh, there was one last winter in Brooklyn that they had indoors," threw in Adelaide excitedly. "I remember perfectly well now. It was historical, though."

"I saw a historical one, now I come to think of it," spoke Dorothy Gray, who rarely said anything, "but it seems to me it had a great many fairies in it."

"Oh, me!" clamored Florence Merriam. "Let me be a fairy!"

"They do have fairies scattered through pretty

Digitized by Google

nearly everything," Winona said thoughtfully. "I don't see why ours couldn't."

"Especially," Helen reminded her, "if we write it so they come in naturally."

"Get your notebook out, Helen," ordered Marie. "You're the secretary, I'm glad to say. Put down 'Scenes for Fairies.'"

"The dances will be easy," Edith Hillis, whose specialty they were, put in. "When they teach little children to do dances like that now all they have to do is to skip in some sort of order. Frisk, you know."

Here several Blue Birds were so moved by the prospect that they got up and started to frisk on the spot, and were only quelled by the suggestion that it was nearly their bedtime.

"We must have scenes that get in all the Boy Scouts, and our ceremonial gowns," remarked Helen, and she put down her own suggestion on the spot.

"And as long as we are running it, it ought to have some sort of relation to us," Winona said.

"And we ought to get Shakespeare in, and a spotlight," suggested Louise enthusiastically.

"Of course we'll have the spotlight, but I don't see how on earth we're going to manage Shakespeare," Marie objected. "You have to have some sort of central idea, and I don't think the Dove of Peace itself could reconcile Shakespeare and Camp Fire gowns."

Digitized by Google

"Have Rosalind wear 'em in the Forest of Arden," threw in Louise cheerfully. But nobody seemed to agree with her.

"I don't see why Shakespeare needs to come into our pageant," said Marie decisively. "They've done so much for him anyway lately that he's probably sorry he ever got born at all, if he knows what's going on."

"Well, maybe when we decide what to have it about we can fit old Bill in," said Louise, who seemed to feel that she owed it to the poet to see that he got his share of notice.

This remark had one good effect. It reminded everybody that they hadn't decided what to have the pageant about at all.

"Read over what you have, Helen," urged Marie.

"Scenes for Fairies, Scouts, Camp Fire Girls, Spotlight, Shakespeare," read Helen.

"Short horse, soon curried," scoffed Louise, who seemed to be irrepressible to-night.

"But we ought to have a central idea!" wailed Marie.

"What's the central idea of us?" asked Winona suddenly, sitting up in her place.

"The guarding of the fire," several of the girls answered together.

"Well, couldn't that be the central idea, in some

Digitized by Google

way?" asked Winona. It was so simple and obvious that nobody had thought of it before.

"Would it be historical?" asked somebody.

"It would have to start way back at the first fire, and how women looked after it," said Marie slowly. "What about Prometheus?"

"Nothing wrong with him, I hope," replied Louise.

"He was the Fire Bringer," explained Marie. It's in the mythology. We might start there or with the cave people."

"Have them both," said Winona enthusiastically. "Prometheus first, then the cave people and their fire."

"Don't forget the symbolic meaning of the fire," warned Mrs. Bryan. "You'll have to have scenes showing that it means the home and the home spirit raying out to the community."

"Why, of course!" cried Winona. "Oh, this is going to be a splendid pageant."

"We'd have to have a scene from the age of chivalry, with the ladies guarding their knights' honor and their castles, while they went to war," put in Adelaide.

So Helen put that down, too.

"And a scene showing the hospitals St. Helena built," added Marie.

"What about Roman scenes, and a Vestal Virgin or so?" put in Winona.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER FIVE

"WE'D want a lot of scenery, wouldn't we?" asked Helen rather apprehensively. "All those scenes that we have down now would take settings and settings."

"Not necessarily," her stepmother told her. "After we have collected enough ideas for scenes we can leave out the ones whose staging is impossible. It is decided, then, to make the Pageant of the Guarded Fire."

"That's a lovely name," said the girls enthusiastically.

Marie yawned.

"I see where we have to get in some suffrage stuff," said she.

By this time the girls were hardened to anything in the pageant line.

"All right, get it in," said they.

Marie insisted on collaboration from all the girls. She made each girl promise to write down as many ideas for the successive scenes as she could think of, with ideas for staging and costume. When they had all done this—they were given a week—she proposed to put all of them together and piece the complete thing out of them. As for the dialogue, nobody was very anxious to do that. But finally Louise's suggestion that they merely put down the things they thought the

Digitized by Google

actors ought to say, very briefly, as if it was a moving picture, helped matters considerably.

The other Camp had been enthusiastically for it from the beginning. Miss Dustin's specialization of Health-Craft, and her profession, made her glad to have her girls go into anything so nearly allied with their work. She and Mrs. Bryan talked it over together, and decided to encourage the girls to have it. Camp Karonya's Home Craft and Camp Wah-wah-tay-see's Health-Craft were in danger of becoming one-sided, each left to itself; but this Pageant was bound to give each Camp a measure of the other's ideas and ideals.

There was enough money in Camp Karonya's treasury to start their costumes, it was thought, and the other Camp proposed to earn some swiftly.

Vicky had sat very still all the evening that Camp Karonya discussed the Pageant. She might almost as well not have been there for all they heard of her.

"Asleep, Vic?" inquired Louise, who was still staying with her, as was Winona. She came over to where Vicky was curled by the fire, after the rest had gone away.

"Oh, no," Vicky answered. "I was just thinking how nice it is to belong. You know, I never have anywhere, before. I'm glad I'm a Blue Bird. The other girls are younger for their ages than I am, but that's

Digitized by Google

all the better. And I was thinking, too, that Uncle Will could help us with the scenery. He knows about costumes, of course, being an artist."

"I expect he could," Winona answered. "I hope he will—do you think so?"

"I shouldn't wonder," Vicky answered.

"Let's talk about the Pageant some more," said Louise. "We're not half through. To begin with, that Prometheus scene will want some scenery."

"Let's get the mythology," said Vicky, "maybe there's a picture in that."

She ran off to the library, and came back with a green book which the three gathered around by the firelight.

"Here it is," said she, after she had hunted through the index. They turned to the picture.

"We'll have to borrow a man," decided Winona. "Prometheus was awfully big."

"That's nothing. The town's full of men we can borrow," said Louise. "The trouble is, we'll have to borrow a rock, too. And has anybody thought how we are going to manage all this fire indoors? If we aren't careful we'll set everything on fire."

The girls were silent after this, thinking.

"Greek fire doesn't burn anything, if you're careful," Winona suggested at length, "we used it for our decorated canoe."

Digitized by Google

"That will do part of the time," agreed Louise. "The rest—I suppose if we had copper trays underneath, with asbestos, we could make real fires without doing much damage."

"Two or three thicknesses of asbestos ought to do it," said Winona. "We could paint it green, too, for the outdoor scenes."

"That's it. We'll need scenery for those. I suppose most of the scenes will be outdoors."

Winona thought some more.

"But I did see a pageant somewhere that was outdoors indoors," she said, and didn't know she'd been Irish till the others laughed.

"They had plain green curtains hung at the back," she went on, "and green curtains at the sides. You scarcely noticed the background. I think there were boughs and green leaves pinned over the curtains. They used that one background for a lot of things. They'd take down a schoolhouse before your eyes, and put up a wigwam in Central Asia, and go on with the party. And really you never knew the difference."

"The rock?" hinted Louise.

"Gray canvas with a few dabs of paint, and a wood frame underneath," said Winona undauntedly. "The more I think of it the more I think we'll have to have a net curtain of some sort to make it so the things won't be so plain."

Digitized by Google

"Well, after we get Prometheus up on his rock—you'll have to put a saw horse or something under him so he won't break it—what is he going to do?" asked Louise with that practicality for which she was noted.

"I don't know," acknowledged Winona honestly, "but I think there are a lot of poems about him. We could get a little dialogue out of one of them; not too much. Marie will have to do that."

"That settles Prommy," said Louise. "Have them make it clear that he brought fire. I don't see any in this picture. Next scene."

"Cave people," said Vicky promptly. "I want to be one of those."

"Their costumes would be simple," said Louise thoughtfully. "Rugs—fur rugs. Not too much of them. The scenery would be simple, too. Canvas for a cave-mouth. What else, Win? You're the one with the ideas."

"Couldn't the men bring him the animal they'd killed?" suggested Winona, "and start to eat it raw—and then somebody get out flint and steel, or whatever it was—and the cave-woman cook it?"

"My child, even in those benighted days," Louise reminded her solemnly, "people didn't cook flint and steel. They might eat their dear ones, but they never went *that* far."

"Well, a Cave People pantomime, anyhow, and

Digitized by Google

a few remarks about this wonderful thing called fire that had been discovered, and how woman must guard it," persisted Winona. "You see, that starts off the Pageant with the central idea we have to have."

"And the people worshipping the fire, or dancing around it," Louise went on. "I think that sounds splendid. Write it down."

"I am," said Winona.

"What next?" asked Louise.

"Wasn't there a pastoral age?" Winona wanted to know.

"I think so, but it's no friend of mine. Somebody else will probably get that in. Go on to the next thing you can think of."

But here there was a break, for they could not think of anything more down till the Vestal Virgins, and they were sure that was too much of a jump.

"Put them down, anyway," Louise ordered.

"They were the guardians of the Sacred Fire, and they wore white," mused Winona.

"We can have a procession of them, carrying it to the altar," said Louise. "A long, pretty march, with torches and things."

"Oh, there'd be two parts to that!" cried Winona remembering something. "The place where they're carried in litters, and if they meet criminals the criminals are freed. We'd have some words to that, too,

Digitized by Google

and a litter wouldn't be hard to make, or criminals hard to get."

"We're going to have trouble with those Scouts, if they have to wear costumes. Remember how they hated it at the tableaux in the camp?"

"Yes, I do," admitted Winona. "But this is different. Why whole towns full of people and colleges full of girls and men go into pageants and dress up in all sorts of things."

"We'll have to go on the principle that the Scouts will. They always do help us out when it comes to the end of things. And if the school does, they will too— they'll have to. Don't let's cross bridges till we come to them."

"Very well," said Winona. "Then there'll be Scouts for criminals."

"That will be a very nice scene," said Louise. "There must be pictures of Vestals that we can have, with words about how they guarded the fire. What comes after Rome?"

"Christianity, I should think."

"Where's the fire in that for women to guard?"

"Well," said Louise, "I suppose the fires when they burnt up martyrs would be a good thing, but——"

"But nobody had to guard *them,*" objected Winona. "That won't hold water. The fire that women guarded then was the light of religion."

Digitized by Google

"Wait a moment," said Louise. "Weren't the Roman women disagreeable creatures who spent too much money and wouldn't stay home or be good, those days? Couldn't we have a street in Rome, with patrician women being horrid, and Christian women being good at home, and teaching their children to guard the fire of faith?"

"Yes, or something like that. There must be lots of stories in the Sunday-school libraries that we could get bits of dialogue out of."

"Well, you try yours, and I'll try mine," said Louise, who went to the Methodist Sunday school, while Winona was a Presbyterian.

"And Edith can try hers. The Episcopal Sunday school library probably has more stories about early Christians than we have."

"All right. But—oh, Winona!"

The interruption was from Vicky. The girls had nearly forgotten her, for the fire was dying down, and they were talking in what was almost a darkened room. And Vicky had been curled up so silently that any one would have been sure she was asleep.

"What is it, Vicky?" they asked, stopping their plans and turning to her.

Vicky sat up, her flushed, dark little face very earnest.

Digitized by Google

"You've forgotten," she said, "what you promised the Blue Birds. Where are the fairy dances?"

Winona looked conscience-stricken.

"So we have," she admitted. "And there ought to be dances all through it, of one kind or another, or Miss Dustin won't think life's worth living."

"There could be a Greek dance before the Vestal Virgins," Louise helped out.

Winona leaned back and poked the fire into a blaze. "Wait," she said. "I have an idea."

This was a formula which Winona's friends respected. Louise kept still till the idea should come out.

"We start with Prometheus, don't we?" she wanted to know.

"So far we do," said Louise. "Of course there are more than our humble selves working at this thing."

"Well, why should we? Or, rather—wait a minute."

Winona dived for the mythology again, and began to flutter the leaves over.

"Here she is," she announced. "Hestia, the Hearth Goddess. But—oh!"

"What?"

"She's the same as Vesta. Only Vesta was Roman and Hestia Greek."

Digitized by Google

"Well, Prometheus was Greek, too, come to that," said Louise at random. It seemed to be the suggestion Winona needed.

"Do you suppose we could take liberties with the mythology?" she wanted to know.

"Well, the only pageant I ever saw the Goddess of Peace did a barefoot dance before General Cornwallis and George Washington," Louise said. "After that I should think we could do a few little things."

"Then," said Winona, "I have a scheme. When Prometheus gets the fire, and has the scene with the goddesses, and there might be a Greek dance there, too, let Hestia come on the scene and take the hearth fire to look after. The dialogue might divide up the fire into different kinds—the fire of war, and the fire of love, and so on, and have each god come get his or her kind—but Hestia takes the hearth fire to keep for mortals."

"Splendid!" said Louise.

"Yes," said persistent Vicky, "but where are our fairy dances?"

"Do have patience," said Winona. "Hestia has a band of attendant spirits, the Fire Spirits, all dressed in red, with tinsel over them. And you could have wings if you wanted. And they can dance in between the acts, and always be with Hestia, because she should come in and out and introduce the different periods,

Digitized by Google

and explain. They will probably have to sing, too. The dresses should be easy to make. Just straight little slips down to the knees, with red tinsel sewed on."

"And they could be unhappy when things were going wrong, and cheer up when they were going right. And Hestia is a sort of guide."

"That's the idea," said Winona. "And I think the girls will like it."

"Meanwhile, speaking of fires," said Louise sensibly, "this one is dying out, and we ought to be in bed, because it's a weekday night, with algebra in the first period tomorrow, alas."

So they covered the fire and went to bed.

The next meeting was not for a week, though Camp Wah-wah-tay-see was told about the pageant idea and took it up enthusiastically. Miss Dustin got the other school teachers interested, and before the girls knew what was going on committees were being formed of teachers and mothers for costuming and grouping and rehearsing and scene painting, and the thing began to get bigger and bigger. And, best of all, though Camp Karonya still had the credit of organizing, the girls found most of the hard work being taken off their shoulders. The town had never had a pageant before, and people were interested.

The day before the next Camp Fire meeting Winona came rushing into Louise's room at Vicky's.

Digitized by Google

"Oh, girls, girls!" she called. "They are going to let us have the Town Hall for the pageant! It is ever so much better than the schoolhouse. Some of the processions can come straight down the middle. And the City Council wants us to put in a scene about the founding of this town. That was home-building, you know, and fire-tending, quite as much as anything else. And it will bring in Indians and settlers and rangers. The boys' uniforms don't need much to make them the Buffalo Bill sort of thing, only fringes and wider hats."

"Tell you something else that I heard from Marie," responded Louise, looking up from her history. "The teachers are going to let the research work we do on that period count for history. We can go and dig in the library and work it up, and do it in history period. That means that we won't have to crowd things so."

"Well, that's an awfully nice, fair thing to do," said Winona thoughtfully.

Louise sat up, flung out her arms, and yawned most impolitely.

"It's time we gave ourselves a few happy moments," said she.

"Aren't you happy?" Winona wanted to know. "Think how swimmingly everything is going."

"Well," Louise answered leisurely, "I'm always

Digitized by Google

more or less happy, even when I'm hungry, but I propose to be more. Father told me this morning that we could have the machine for a day's ride, all by our four lonesomes. He's so impressed by his public-spirited daughter, and the good she's helping to do the town, that he'd almost let me conduct his business."

Winona sprang up in delight. "Not really, Louise? Oh, how wonderful! When?"

"Any time we want it. But we'll naturally want to go Saturday, unless the boys have something planned for that day."

Winona ran to the telephone and got her own house.

"Is Tom there?" she asked.

"That you, Winona?" Florence answered. "Yes. I'll get him."

Tom came to the telephone and answered.

"No, there's nothing special going to happen Saturday that I know of," he said when she asked him. "Why?"

"We can have the big Lane automobile for that day," his sister told him; "that is, if you and Billy can go too. Can you?"

"I can, and I know Billy'll jump at the chance," Tom answered. "We'll start in the morning and take luncheon, and build a fire in the middle of the day to

Digitized by Google

cook things, and get back for supper, or maybe have supper out too. What do you think?"

"Oh, I think we'll do it, of course," she answered. "Find out about Billy, please, and tell me."

She stood at the telephone a moment longer, while Tom called up his chum, waiting to have him call her up again.

"Billy can come," he told her in a moment more.

"All right," she answered, and hung up the receiver.

"Is it all right?" asked Louise.

"Yes," said Winona.

"Then give me the telephone and I'll break the news to father," said Louise.

Saturday proved to be a perfect day in October, bright and fresh and thrilling. The two girls rose early and made a luncheon, as they always did on the excursions the four took together. There were two or three kinds of sandwiches, one of the big chocolate cakes that Winona made so well, and condensed milk and cocoa in cans ready to make over the fire. They packed a large basket full of things to eat, for they knew of old the kinds of appetites they had to deal with.

"What do you suppose will happen to us this time?" Winona wondered as they finished the basket and hooked down the lids. "Every time so far that

Digitized by Google

we four have gone off together something thrilling has happened. Once we found Sandy, and once the boys shot those pedigreed ducks by mistake, and once there was the canoe-prize, and then that other time we were here at home together——"

Louise began to laugh. "I remember. Shall I ever forget Henry, the intellectual rooster, and what a lot of money those horrid people next door charged us for him? And then we pretended you were our stepmother."

Winona began to laugh too.

"Them was the days!" she declared. "Well, nothing very much can have a chance to happen on a mere auto-ride, unless a tire bursts, or we have a puncture."

"The boys know how to mend punctures," Louise reminded her, "and I know father wouldn't let us have a car with a tire that ever thought of bursting. No, I don't see what can happen, unless the sticks are too damp to build a fire for the cocoa."

"Well, we'll see," said Winona, pulling her little white felt hat down further over her brown curls, and anchoring it with a veil—for it promised to be a breezy day.

They met the boys at Louise's by the garage, and started off gayly.

"Where shall we go?" Billy asked from the wheel.

Digitized by Google

Louise, on the back seat by Tom, laughed.

"And thin I says to mesilf, we're goin' wherever we go,
But where we'll be whin we git there 'tis never a know I know,"

she quoted. "Why worry about where we're going? We can always find our way back by a road-map, such as you trusty Scouts carry in your faithful coat-pockets. Let's—— Wait. Let's drive till we find a good road that none of us know anything about and then follow that. That will be a real adventure."

"I believe you want one!" said Tom, who never quite got over being surprised at Louise Lane.

"I know I do!" said Louise frankly. "I always do. The bluggier the better."

"M'm," said Billy Lee, and said nothing more.

"Well," asked Winona gayly, "what are you m'ming about, Billy Lee?"

Billy looked at pretty Winona, sitting beside him with the wind blowing her veil and her curls about, and smiled. Billy and Winona were very good friends.

"Not you," said he; "you're not doing anything that will worry the goblins."

"What do you mean?" Winona asked him again curiously. "Goblins?"

Billy laughed again, and changed to a faster speed as the road became less traveled.

"I was brought up down South," said he, "by

Digitized by Google

a colored mammy. And she used to say, 'Lamb, don' you wish fur anything you don' want to git. Never know what the goblins may be doin'."

"Oh, how funny!" said Winona. "And do you think Louise may get what she wants?"

"Never can tell," said Billy in what was meant to be a very serious voice. Then he laughed, and they all laughed, and felt as if this promised to be a specially good time. And the machine went on for another hour without the vestige of an adventure.

"Where are we now?" Louise asked then. "Do either of you boys know?"

"About eighteen miles from home," Tom said. "As long as we keep to this road we'll be on known ground, as far as Billy and I are concerned. But if you want us to branch off to the next side road that looks as if we could drive on it, why, then you'll be going somewhere that neither of us know much about. Want to risk it?"

"I don't see why we shouldn't," said Winona. "We all have our compasses, and you boys have maps. Let's try it."

So they branched off down the very next road they came to, to the right.

It was a very pretty country road, with tall trees on either side, clumps of woodland. The girls got out occasionally to pick autumn flowers, and on one of

Digitized by Google

their stoppages a small bird lighted on the edge of the car and looked at them before he flew away. And once Louise had to run for the car because a long shiny black snake slipped out of a group of bushes and glided by, uncomfortably near. But this last was the nearest that the adventure Louise wanted came to them.

After that she was a little less anxious to have it come.

"I think that was my adventure," she said, "that black snake."

"Oh, nonsense," said Tom. "That wouldn't make an adventure for a mouse. Just having a snake go by on his way home, and look at you. Why wasn't it an adventure when that old white horse looked at you, before we got away from the town?"

"The horse wasn't going to bite me," said Louise practically.

"Neither was the snake," said Tom. "That was a black snake, and they don't bite. Of course, he *might* have been going to wind his tail around your neck and strangle you to death——"

But Louise shivered at the idea, and suggested that they start the car again, and build their noon fire at a safe distance from the kind snake who was merely going home to his family.

"I don't seem to care for the idea that he has

Digitized by Google

a family," she explained. "And some of them may be too young to have learned good manners, and perhaps they bite strangers."

So, though the others laughed, the car was started again, and stopped a comfortable distance from snaky-looking places.

While the girls unpacked the hamper and spread out the large luncheon on a paper tablecloth which they had bought for the occasion, and which had dazzling paper napkins matching it exactly, the boys built a fire.

"This is the—— What do you call it, Billy? You know the long words," said Tom as they poured out the steaming cocoa, and had recovered from the surprise of finding that Louise had brought along a can of green peas, which she heated over the fire and served to them all on patty-shells, which she had also kept in concealment.

"I don't know what it is," Billy answered, biting cleverly into his patty in such a manner that he scarcely spilled a pea. "The mid-day meal, I suppose you want to say."

"No I don't," protested Tom. "I mean the some kind of moment—you know, the right kind of a moment for Louise's adventure."

"Oh," said Billy, "I get you. Psychological moment. That what you want?"

Digitized by Google

"Yes, it is," assented Tom. "Thanks, old boy. Louise, this is the psychological moment for your adventure to advench. Trot it out!"

"Have another sandwich instead," Louise offered. "I tell you I've had my adventure. One big snake."

"You didn't have any such a thing," Tom told her calmly.

"Well, I don't make them come," Louise protested. "They happen to me. I can't press a button and bring them in. I wish I had a drink of water."

"There must be a spring somewhere near," Billy thought. "Shall we go hunt for it now or wait till we've had everything else to eat?"

"Better wait," Louise answered.

"But I'm nearly through," Winona said. "I'll go and look, and bring you back some in my collapsible cup."

She sprang up, brushed the crumbs off her lap, and ran into the woods. Billy, who had never been able to break himself of a Southern feeling that girls shouldn't be allowed to go about much alone, followed more slowly.

They hunted down the woods, guided by a faint trickle Winona thought she heard and then was sure of. Presently they came out into a little rocky, open space where a small, clear stream fell over some rocks.

Digitized by Google

As they neared it Winona stopped and caught at Billy's arm.

"Billy," she said, "I think we've found Louise's adventure!"

For near the spring, face downward, in an attitude which was certainly not that of sleep, lay a slim figure.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER SIX

THE two stood stock-still for a moment, looking. Then, moved by the same impulse, they hurried forward and knelt by the down-flung figure.

It was a boy about Billy's age, with fair hair. His clothes were very torn and ragged, and his shoes worn. They turned him over, as he did not move at their coming. He was unconscious.

"What do you suppose is the matter with him?" Winona whispered, sprinkling water in the white face methodically as she asked.

Billy thrust his hand into the bosom of the lad's torn shirt.

"I don't know," he answered. "His heart's very weak. Go get Tom, Win. We'd better carry him to the fire. He hasn't many clothes on, and it's been cold, and he's awfully thin. I'm afraid he's fainted from hunger—exposure."

Winona was still panting, but she hurried back to the roadside fire before Billy was done speaking, calling for Tom.

Louise and Tom were still sitting by the fire, and they sprang up when she spoke to them.

"There isn't time to explain," she called breathlessly. "Come, Tom quick!"

Digitized by Google

The others rushed back the way she showed them. It was a short way if you went straight, and a little run showed them the spring again, with Billy still working over the unconscious boy.

"Help me carry him back to the fire, Tom," Billy said briefly.

They made a chair of their hands, and, the girls helping, got him in it and carried him back, laying him close to the fire.

"His hands are like ice," said Winona in a frightened tone. She had touched them as she helped to balance him.

She ran to the car for one of the robes, and wrapped it around him. Billy and Tom were still working his arms.

She set the cocoa back on the fire and heated it again. Then she poured a cupful of it out and bent over the boy.

"See if you can get him to drink a little of this," she said. "Maybe it will help bring him to."

Billy took it and held it to the boy's close-shut lips. Tom tried to open them. The boy's teeth were clenched, but they got a few drops of the hot cocoa into his mouth. The boys went on working his arms for a moment longer, then tried the cocoa again. Presently the strange boy's eyes half opened, and he looked at them.

Digitized by Google

"Why—thanks," he said vaguely, but in a voice that showed he was not a street-boy or a tramp.

"Here, drink some more," urged Billy, and held the cup to his lips again, while Winona pulled the robe up higher around him. The boy drank eagerly, till it was all gone. Winona came to his side again with a sandwich, and fed it to him, for he seemed too weak to move.

"Here, Win, be careful," Tom warned her. "If he hasn't had anything lately you'll have to go gently. Not too much at a time."

The boy looked from one to the other of them.

"I haven't," he said simply. "I fancy that's why I keeled over."

"But just one sandwich wouldn't hurt him, especially a chicken one," Winona pleaded.

"No, I guess it wouldn't," Billy decided.

The boy took it eagerly—he seemed a little stronger by now, what with the warmth of the fire and of the drink and food—and finished it leaning against Billy's knees.

"You're Americans, aren't you?" he asked weakly when he was done.

Winona, whom he seemed to feel was more his friend than the others, perhaps because she had given him the food he needed so badly, smiled and nodded.

"Oh, yes," she answered, "of course we're Amer-

Digitized by Google

icans. This is America, you know; you're in the Northern States."

"I fancy I'm dizzy yet," said the boy. "I can't seem to remember. I know I wasn't here when I went over, though."

"No," said Billy, "we found you by the spring, a little way in the woods there."

"I don't remember that, either," said the boy, beginning to look very troubled. "I know I wasn't in America, last I can remember."

"Well, don't bother," advised Winona soothingly. "It will come back when you feel stronger. And—boys, can't he have another sandwich now?"

They thought he could, and for a second time the bountiful provision the girls had made for lunch helped a stranger. There were several more sandwiches than anybody needed, and by degrees they let their strange friend have them all. In spite of his very obvious hunger, he ate nicely. Presently, having finished, he sat quiet for a moment, as if he did not quite know what to do or say next. He obviously wanted to ask some more questions, and did not feel that he ought to worry these unknown helpers of his.

"Thank you," he said finally. "I think I'd better be going now."

Louise sat up indignantly and clutched his arm.

"Going?" she exclaimed. "Indeed you're not.

Digitized by Google

You know perfectly well you haven't any engagement that you need to keep. Why do you want to go?"

"Well, there's no use messing up your picnic," he explained, a little awkwardly. "You've been awfully good to me, and I'm certainly very grateful. But I feel better now, and probably I can find a village near here where I can get something to do till I can get back to my people."

"But you don't know where you are," chimed in Winona. "Please, at least stay here and let us tell you the things you started to ask us when you came to."

The boy sat down again.

"That's right," added Billy encouragingly. "We have all the time there is, and so have you. Go ahead, old fellow."

"I'll have to tell you about myself first," said the boy hesitatingly, "and some of it sounds horridly as if it wasn't true. I told some people I met awhile ago, and they laughed at me."

"We won't laugh," promised Tom.

"Well, to begin with, I can't remember anything but my first name. That's Roger. And of course that sounds queer—at least, I suppose it does. And, besides that, there's a whole stretch of time that I know I must have forgotten. All I can remember is patches here and there. I know I'm English, and I

Digitized by Google

know some shock must have come to connect me with the war. And that's about all I do know."

The boys and girls leaned closer to him.

"Tell us everything you can remember," invited Louise. "There's no reason why what you say shouldn't be true. Lots of people forget things that way. I've heard about it before."

"Well, I'm glad you don't think I'm telling a whopper," said Roger relievedly. "I don't like it, I can tell you, being all at sea about myself. Well, what I can remember is this: I know I was at school somewhere in Europe, and somebody did something to the town. Burned it, I fancy. I can remember the flames, anyway, and the awful noises.. And I know I was struck on the head, because here's the scar. And then I don't remember much of anything, except being awfully ill, and on a ship coming over. That's all mixed up and not clear, about the ship. And then things cleared up for good, about two weeks ago, but I've no more idea than a rabbit what my last name is, or who my people are. And you see I haven't decent clothes or any money. I don't know how that happened, either, but it seems natural enough that it should happen. I suppose I hadn't time to take any of either with me. But the queerest thing of all, as far as I can see, is my getting over here to America. The last I can remember is that town in France some-

Digitized by Google

where, where the school was—and the ship a little."

When he was done the others were silent a little while. It was a wonderful story—and yet it seemed a natural one enough.

"What are you going to do?" asked Billy finally.

Roger smiled a little. He seemed weak still, and no wonder. But he sat up alertly.

"Why, there's only one thing to do, isn't there?" he said. "Try to find some work to do, and save enough money to get back to England, and see if I'll remember any more there."

"You'd better apply to your consul, too," Billy suggested wisely. Billy always did have good ideas.

"Do you mean to say," burst out Louise, "that you're going off now somewhere, all tired out yet from fainting, and try to get things to do without knowing anybody?"

"Why, of course," said Roger. "What else?"

"Don't you remember one teeny, weeny little thing about yourself?" she went on insistently.

"Only one other. I'm a Boy Scout," said Roger quite unexpectedly.

Both boys sat up.

"A Boy Scout!" said they almost together, like a chorus.

He nodded.

Digitized by Google

"Why—why——" began Winona, and Louise spoke excitedly on top of her.

"Why, they're Boy Scouts too! And we're Camp Fire Girls—don't you know, the Camp Fire Girls here, and the Woodcraft Girls, are like your Girl Guides over in England."

"And so we've just got to help you, if you'll let us," finished Winona, with her eyes dancing with pleasure.

The boys, more slowly, added their quota.

"Sure! You have to let us see you through," said Tom, and Billy backed him up.

"What—what do you mean?" asked Roger.

"I'll tell you what we mean, to begin with," stated Tom. "We mean that we want you to get into this buzz-wagon with us and go back to the town we live in. And we want you to let the fellows do the same kind of thing for you that a bunch of you would do for any of us if he got caught over there. And we want you to stay at my house—Winona's and mine—for a week anyhow, till you've turned round and seen how the cat's jumping. Will you do it?"

"Will I do it?" asked Roger, his thin face flushing up. "You bet I'll do it. I always heard Americans were kind, but I supposed it wasn't so, after the—well, the things that have been happening to me lately. But I see that the better-class Americans *are*."

Digitized by Google

"Oh, we aren't better-class Americans specially," Tom answered, grinning. "We're just folks. And, by the way, I don't believe you know any of our names yet, do you? I'm Tom Merriam, and the lightweight with the brown curly hair is my sister Winona. The nice plump one with pink foliage——"

But here Louise forgot manners and threw a pine-cone at him—hard.

"The beautifully rounded one with lovely golden hair is Louise Lane," she said severely, "and the boy who doesn't talk much, the one that found you, is Billy Lee. He isn't folks; he's a Southern aristocrat; awfully haughty, aren't you, Bill?"

Roger looked a little bewildered by all this.

"Never mind them," said Winona soothingly. "I'm Winnie, that's Louise, and the others are Tom and Billy. That's all."

"I—well, you see, my sisters don't cheek me that way," said Roger with true British bluntness. "That was what bothered me."

Louise was going to sit up from her lounging position on the pine-needles and "cheek" him again in reply, but Winona was so excited by something in his words that she didn't stop to be vexed by them.

"You said 'My sisters'!" she cried. "You've remembered something more! Do you know, I think

Digitized by Google

lots of it is going to come back to you. It's just a bad shock."

Roger's eyes lighted.

"That's true!" he said. "I have sisters. Two—Ethel and Dorothea. Now, why—oh, why on earth can't I remember my last name, when I can remember that?"

"You will," Winona assured him again.

And, remembering that the poor boy must be feeling ill still, she suggested that they all get into the auto and go back home.

It was only about three o'clock, but they all thought it would be a good thing to do. So they piled into the machine, and started on their way.

At the first house that looked as if it might have telephone connection, Tom stopped the car, jumped out, and telephoned to his mother. It was rather a difficult thing to explain at length over the telephone, especially as the children of the house were very much interested, and insisted on asking him if his mother said he could do it, while he was trying to get a better connection. But finally he managed it.

"An English boy that can't remember his name, dear?" his mother asked in a puzzled way. "But you say he seems pleasant—and he didn't ask for anything? Well, at worst"—she laughed a little—"we haven't much he could steal. And if the four of you all think

Digitized by Google

he's all right, why, I'll risk it. Certainly, bring him back with you, and we'll see what we can do for him."

"You certainly are a brick, mother!" Tom telephoned gratefully back.

"It's all right," he called to the waiting four in the machine. "She says to come right on up."

"You know," the slower Billy added, "you're to come and stay with me awhile, when you're tired of old Tom. I live next door to him."

"I say, you know," said the bewildered Roger, "you really are awfully kind."

But they only laughed and told him it was a natural thing to do—which it really was from their point of view.

When they reached the Merriam house, Mrs. Merriam was waiting on the porch to greet them. She took to Roger immediately, which lifted rather a load off the young people's minds, for though they knew she would be nice to him whether she trusted him or not, the fact that she did trust him made them absolutely sure his story was true.

"You want a bath, don't you?" she said briskly. "And a good rest after that. Tom will show you where the spare room is, and everything else there is to know about this house—not very much—it just fits us nicely."

Digitized by Google

Roger's eyes filled with tears, of weakness, as she spoke, patting his shoulder in a motherly fashion.

"Why, there!" she said. "Everything will be all right. Don't feel badly."

Then Tom took him upstairs, and left the others downstairs on the porch.

"Well, you certainly brought something home this time, Lou," said Billy.

Louise looked at him for a moment in surprise.

"Well, I never thought of it, but I certainly did!" said she.

"Billy, do you suppose something like that is going to happen every time I say I want something?"

Billy laughed.

"I told you about the goblins," he said mischievously.

Louise looked dismayed.

"Well, all I can say is, next time I'll tell them exactly what it is I do want. I'll state that it's a silk dress or a diamond necklace—and then they won't produce a pale and fainting wanderer from across the sea."

"Seems like a nice fellow," said Billy, the tolerant, picking up his cap and preparing to go on home. "We fellows will have to see him through for a while, anyhow."

Digitized by Google

"I don't see why Camp Karonya shouldn't help," insisted Louise, jealous for the honor of the Camp Fire.

"All right. I fancy there's going to be enough assistance needed to go around."

Louise went back into the Merriam house. Winona met her, with her finger up for silence.

"The poor boy's gone off to sleep, just as soon as his head touched the pillow. He must have been awfully worn out. Oh, Louise, who do you suppose he is?"

"One of the English crown princes, I haven't a doubt," Louise suggested. "Anyway, he seems to be a real war-victim. I certainly hope he comes to and remembers his past life after he's had something to eat."

Winona looked serious.

"Mother says it may be weeks and months before he remembers," she answered. "She says we ought to have a doctor come and see him, somebody who knew what to do about it."

"If the Camp Fire and the Boy Scouts are taking care of him, there ought to be somebody with a doctor for a father. Let's see—Arthur Hope's father is a doctor."

Winona laughed.

"Do you know what we remind me of? That

Digitized by Google

thing Artemus Ward said, about being willing to let all his wife's able-bodied relations go and die for their country. We aren't doing one thing, ourselves."

"Well, we can't help it if none of the girls have a father for a doctor—I mean a doctor for a father."

"I wonder," mused Winona, "just what you'd call looking after Roger? Would it be home-craft, or wood-craft, or what?"

"Well," asked Louise practically, "what do you suppose we will have to do with it?"

She sat down, as the discussion promised to be more or less a long one.

"We have our school work to do," said Winona.

"We have," said Louise. "We also have this pageant proposition on our hands. We also have a few little things apiece to do around the house. Then there's Camp Fire work, too, and altogether I don't know what to do with my leisure time this winter. I think I'll take a correspondence course in shoemaking."

"We will be pretty busy," agreed Winona. "But, anyway, I think everything will be all right."

Roger slept all the rest of that day and evening. He was up for breakfast that next morning, however, seeming only a little tired and shaky. He seemed, as well, a little shy of Mr. Merriam, but he was soon reassured. Indeed, the way the whole family made him welcome would have made any one feel at home.

Digitized by Google

"Suppose it was Tom who was lost that way," Mrs. Merriam said to Winona under her breath. "We'd want people to be as good to him as was possible."

"I know," said Winona.

After breakfast, before it was time to go to church, everyone sat out on the porch, for it was still warm weather, and talked it over. Roger still could not remember, and felt very uncomfortable, he said, about it. He started at little sounds, they noticed, and in several ways showed he had badly broken nerves still.

"We'll take you over and let the doctor have a look at you," Mr. Merriam promised. "Then we can tell better where we are."

"Thank you," said Roger gratefully.

He had on a suit of Tom's, which fitted him fairly well, and looked very unlike indeed the forlorn and ragged lad Billy and Winona had discovered. They decided that he was too tired to go to church that day, so he stayed at home in the hammock, and Winona, who was quite willing, stayed with him. He clung to her, and to Billy, as if the fact that they had found him made him belong to them.

"You know," he said to her earnestly "I can't keep this up staying here with you kind people. I must go somewhere else, and work, till I can remember and can hear from my own people."

Digitized by Google

Winona laughed.

"I wouldn't do it right now, anyway," she said soothingly. "Make us a little visit till you are rested. And when you remember, after the war is over, perhaps you'll ask us to come and visit you, wherever you live in England. Mother says that then perhaps we will go abroad for a summer."

"Oh, if you could see my home!" he said excitedly. "It's way off in the country, with a great deal of ground around it. There's a splendid cricketing-green, too. And the Pater——"

He leaned back in his hammock, and a disappointed look came over his face.

"I nearly remembered then," he said wistfully. "I almost knew the county. And now it's all faded."

"But don't you see," Winona encouraged him, "that simply proves that you're going to remember more and more? And I'm going to put down everything you remember in a little book, and then we can piece it together."

So she went in and got a little notebook and a pencil, and they put it all down. It wasn't much, but it made a beginning.

"I saw Dr. Hope," said Mr. Merriam, when the family had come back from church. "He's coming up to look you over, my boy, and see what he thinks

Digitized by Google

of you. He told me to tell you that you weren't to try to worry things out, or to think. You're just to rest your mind as much as you can."

Dr. Hope, when he came, said much the same thing. He questioned Roger closely about the circumstances he remembered last, and the things he had been through.

"It's a plain case of loss of memory from shock," he said. "Everything is simple enough, except how you got over here. That seems queer, unless you are a Canadian, and were sent home. Are you, do you think?"

But Roger shook his head. "I'm pretty sure I'm English," he insisted. "I don't feel as if I had any friends over here. You know, I didn't even know where I was till they told me."

"Well, the only thing for you to do is to rest and not worry," said the doctor again. "It will all come back in due time."

Roger looked happier.

"But isn't there anything I can do about it?" he asked.

"There isn't much use in communicating with the English authorities," Mr. Merriam told him. "All we could say would be that an English boy named Roger, who was at school on the Continent, was here with us. Still, we'll write to the consul, on the off-chance. If

Digitized by Google

your people are where they can be gotten at we may get results in a little while. But I have no doubt—have you, Hope?—that in a week or so you'll have it all back, and tell us yourself where you came from. Meanwhile, I'd advise you to see what studies you remember, and go to school with the boys. It will keep you from brooding."

"'I'll go get my books," offered Tom eagerly. "Then Roger can see how far ahead he is and what he knows."

Tom came out with an armful of books, which he piled up on Roger, who had flung himself in the hammock as soon as the two men had gone, Mr. Merriam walking down the road with Dr. Hope. The two boys went over them together. They found that Roger was far ahead of Tom in Latin, about even with him in mathematics, and naturally knew a good deal about English history and not much American. However, there was enough to start with, and they decided that it could be managed.

So Roger got up next morning and went to school with the others, quite as if he had been living there forever.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER SEVEN

"WHO is going to stay with the Mitchell children this week?" Louise demanded to Winona.

"Helen said she would," Winona answered. "But, do you know, Louise, we have them more or less in running order. This pageant business is going to get them in touch with the children of their own age. And Billy and Tom will let Lance tag around after the Scouts, they say."

"Let's go down and see them after school," said Louise wistfully. "I still feel as if we'd copyrighted them. I hate to have them as much improved by Helen as they were by me. Which is a low feeling, Winona, I would state."

Winona giggled.

"What a good thing it is that you always know your own low feelings when you see them!" she said.

"Well, it saves me from having them mentioned by others," said Louise providently.

So after school that day they went over to the Mitchell house again.

"We haven't any business here at all," explained Louise to Helen, whom they met on the doorstep.

"Marie's staying here, too," said Helen. "We're making it Bluebird headquarters. It seems a splendid place for it, because the children practically run the

Digitized by Google

house, you know. Their uncle seems resigned to there being a fearful amount of noise, anyway, and as long as they don't come upstairs and burst in on him when he's doing sunsets or whatever it is, he doesn't care. Marie's upstairs with a group of Bluebirds now, and we expect Edith Hillis over here soon to start training them in the fairy dances."

"I see that we are little faded flowers of yesterday," said Louise, attempting to droop.

Winona laughed.

"How do Vicky and Sandy fit into the Bluebirds?" she asked. "I don't feel a bit like a faded flower. You know perfectly well, Louise, we have enough things to look after—I'm not a human dynamo like you!"

Louise gave her a grin and a pat, and the girls sat down to talk it over.

"They fit into the Blue Birds splendidly," said Helen, answering Winona's question. "But I might as well break the news to you, Winnie; Vicky is going to make your sister Florence work hard to keep the leadership of her crowd. When she's surer of her bearings with the girls she's going to help run things. She's old for her age, and has heaps of ideas."

"Do Florence good," said Winona heartlessly.

"Oh, Florence is taking it all right," said Helen. "She and Vicky are getting to be chums already!"

Digitized by Google

"Good," said Florence's sister. "Perhaps there won't be any more wild journeys toward the front as Red Cross nurses, with Vicky's more or less grown-up viewpoint balancing Florence."

"Also, she's going to school," said Helen. "The Blue Birds did that, too."

"The Blue Birds seem to be doing most everything," said Louise longingly. "Can't I ever improve my Vicky any more?"

"Oh, she adores you," said Helen.

At this point the Blue Birds could be heard clattering down the stairs, and Edith Hillis, fairylike and hurried, came up the steps.

"Can't stop," she said breathlessly. "Late already—training Blue Birds."

She waved her hand to her friends and dashed into the house, where she could be heard being welcomed tumultuously. Then the listeners outside heard Marie crash into a waltz on the piano, and the tramp of forty small feet in what was eventually to be a fairy dance.

"'That's more Blue Birds than we ever owned," said Louise, still seeking information.

"Come and look in the window," invited Helen. "All the Camp Wah-wah-tay-see Blue Birds are in this, too, naturally. There are twenty-five altogether."

The two girls gazed in.

Digitized by Google

The little girls were practising an entrance as fairies, with the two tallest at their head, and Edith for the Fairy Queen. Edith, who was a rather languid, exceedingly pretty girl with blue eyes and fly-away yellow hair, was studious Marie's chum. Two more unlike girls could not be imagined, for Marie was tall and serious and read a great deal. She wanted to write when she grew up. Edith, on the other hand, never read if she could help it, and cared more for dancing and designing pretty clothes than anything else. The Camp Fire Girls, ruthlessly using everybody in sight for the Pageant, had turned both Edith's talents to account for the community's good, and she was at the head of the committee on costumings and dances. It kept her so busy that it was rumored she had bought no new clothes for two months, and was actually wearing her last spring's suit for a fall one with perfect calm.

"Great industry going on within," said Louise, removing her nose from the pane.

"Yes, and I have to go in and work, too," said Helen, turning. "This is what you brought on us with your ideas for a pageant, Lou and Winnie!"

She laughed and ran in, leaving the girls outside.

"Let's go back to our little Roger," said Louise. "Anyway, the Blue Birds won't take him away from us!"

Digitized by Google

"The Scouts will," said Winona placidly.

Louise burst into her favorite song of "Something to Do," with which she filled the ears of her friends morning, noon, and night, and the girls went back to Winona's house to do some work on their own part of the Pageant. There was enough work to go around.

The introduction of Roger was a problem yet to be met. Going to school, he would doubtless have to meet the boys and girls of Tom's and Winona's crowd, and Winona did not know just what to do about telling them his story. She had no chance to ask him, or Tom, before the first questions were fired at her. She had expected cross-questioning from some of the girls, but she had no idea that it would be listless, half-indifferent Adelaide who would start it.

"Who is it with Tom?" Adelaide whispered as they crossed the hall together and went up the stairs for their history period.

"He's—he's a friend of ours that's staying with us for a while, from England," said Winona.

She was a little puzzled how to reply. She wanted to tell the truth, but not to be indiscreet. If Roger was willing, she could tell everything she knew; but it seemed like too complicated a story to pass around to every one without permission.

Fortunately Adelaide did not notice that Winona was not telling much.

Digitized by Google

"I heard Tom call him Roger," she went on.

"Yes," said Winona, glad to get off so easily, "that's his name. He comes from England."

Adelaide's curious, red-brown eyes looked down the hall after Roger and Tom.

"He seems nice," she said a little indifferently.

"He is," Winona assured her.

Then she looked at Adelaide. Adelaide and Winona had seen a good deal of each other in camp that summer, and Winona had come to the point where she could tell pretty accurately when things were bothering Adelaide and when they weren't. Adelaide had had altogether too much care for a girl of her age, because her mother had died when she and her brother were quite small. And it had made her less cheerful and sunny than the other Camp Karonya girls were. She was apt to think that the world didn't treat her just the way it should. Winona had shaken a good deal of it out of her, but it did come back occasionally.

"'Adelaide, something's bothering you," she asserted calmly. "I know there is, perfectly well. What's the matter now?"

There were five minutes yet before history period. Adelaide and Winona sat down on a window-ledge in the hall they were crossing, and Adelaide began to tell.

Digitized by Google

"Nothing at all—that is, nothing new," she said. "That hateful old place we live in——"

"What about it?" Winona asked relentlessly. "It's just the same as it ever was, isn't it?"

"That's just the trouble," sighed Adelaide. "The furniture and the carpet and everything are just the same as they've been for a million years, I believe. I suppose when Lonny and Frances and I are old, gray, worn-out people, we'll still be living in that old, horrid flat, sitting on the same haircloth sofa and keeping our feet on the same old carpet with yellow and pink roses on it—at least, the roses were yellow and pink once. Now they only think they are."

"Adelaide, you always make me think of the old lady that said 'she had only two teeth left, but thank goodness they met,'" said Winona.

"I don't see why," said Adelaide blankly.

"Because you're so unlike her," explained Winona. "But good gracious, there's the bell, and if we don't hurry up we'll be as late as anything. But I'm going to have it out with you afterwards."

"There's nothing you can have out," said Adelaide breathlessly as they scudded down the hall to their classroom. Nevertheless she looked relieved, and after school she was quite willing to have Winona tackle her again.

"Let's go over to your place," Winona proposed

Digitized by Google

boldly. "I want to see if the haircloth sofa and the rest are as bad as you think they are."

"They're worse," said Adelaide, leading the way resignedly.

The place where Adelaide and her old brother Lonny and her little sister Frances lived with their father was a rather nice little apartment, which the girls took care of out of school hours, with the help of their father and brother. Mr. Hughes had very little money, and they could not afford a maid. Frances, who was ten, liked housework fairly well, but Adelaide hated it. So that morning she had dashed off, leaving the dishes and the beds just exactly as they were.

"It does look worse than it needs to," she admitted, looking a little ashamed, "but even when it's tidy it won't be like anybody else's place."

Winona perched herself on the arm of the haircloth sofa Adelaide despised so, and looked around her.

"Why not tidy everything as very, very tidy as we can get it," she offered, "and then we can see what it really does look like at its best."

"I'll do the dishes while you do the beds," said Adelaide nobly, for every one knows how far beds are preferable to dishes.

"Not a bit of it," answered Winona. "I'll do

Digitized by Google

those dishes. It's rather fun doing other people's work, I think."

Adelaide let her very gladly, for your own dishes cannot be called fun by any stretch of imagination.

After the dishes, which included the tidying of the kitchen, and the beds were done, Winona found an elderly broom and went to work at the living-room and dining-room. She swept and dusted swiftly and efficiently, and presently had the little place as tidy as it was possible. Adelaide meanwhile had been tidying the two bedrooms, and had ended by sitting down to a large hole in her own stocking.

"There," said Winona, breathless but successful, "now we can see what's to be done."

The two girls looked around the room carefully. It had, as Adelaide said, a very bad carpet, a Brussels that was worn to the bone. The chairs were not mates, which didn't specially matter, but their covering was different kinds of faded plush, which did. The sofa sat mournfully against the wall, looking, among the plush chairs of a later date, like an old country grandmother, disapproving of her middle-aged daughters in their shabby finery.

"And that table!" said Adelaide scornfully. "Just look at it! It's a drop-leaf, and it's my firm opinion that it's old enough to die. Other people have nice shiny round extension tables."

Digitized by Google

Winona perched herself on the arm of the despised sofa, and took things in all over again.

"We'll take the easiest thing first," she counselled.

"Is anything the easiest?" inquired Adelaide with one uplifted eyebrow.

"Something must be," said Winona placidly. "Come, I can't do all the heavy brainwork. You see what you think would be the easiest thing to do."

"Make curtains," said Adelaide after she had thought hard for a minute.

"I have been intending to do that, because I know I could make some like those nice unbleached cheesecloth ones up in your bedroom, and put them up. But every time I'd start to do that I'd see the rest of the room glaring at me, and get discouraged. I have the material now."

"Why shouldn't we hem it while we think?" suggested Winona. "We have two hours yet before supper time."

So they got out the unbleached cheesecloth and began to measure off curtains and do them as they talked.

"Now the next thing?" inquired Winona.

"Look at the walls!" said Adelaide.

Winona looked at them critically.

"They are rather awful," she admitted. "They'd give me the blues if I had to live with them, I think."

Digitized by Google

"Wouldn't they?" agreed Adelaide. "How Lonny stays so cheerful I can't think. Horrid old greeny-yellowy things, with those horrid curlicues on them. And when you lie on the sofa and watch them the curlicues have a way of getting twisted into faces. There are four and a half faces that they make. I don't know which is the worst!"

"You'll have to have fresh paper on the walls," admitted Winona.

"And a fresh carpet on the floor and fresh stuff on the chairs," Adelaide completed.

"Well?" said Winona.

"Well—I can't, that's all. We can't afford it by any means. And how can I have anybody here or go see anybody without asking them back? You know we went over that once, up at camp."

"I know we did," Winona answered, "and we decided that we could do something if we only thought long enough."

She went on with her hemming in silence for awhile, thinking hard as she worked.

"Can I come back tomorrow?" she asked finally, folding up the last curtain she had finished. "It will take us all that time to do the curtains, and it must be nearly time for me to go home."

"You're an angel to put all this time on my old curtains," Adelaide declared.

Digitized by Google

"Well, they'll make a lot of difference," said Winona with due modesty. Then she went home.

Louise came over afterwards.

"Louise——" said Winona.

"Oh, dear!" said Louise.

"Why do you say that?" Winona asked, bending forward and laughing, and giving Louise, who was in the hammock, a little swing.

"Because when you say 'Louise' like that I know what's coming," said Louise placidly. It was after supper, and the two girls were on Winona's porch, talking. Tom and Billy had taken Roger off to a meeting of the Scouts, and the girls were alone. "You have an idea!"

"And why not?" asked Winona.

"If it's a picnic, all right. But if it's an uplift bee, life's too short."

"'Tisn't either," said Winona serenely. "It's just advice that I want."

"Advice," said Louise, "is my strong point. People I advise never use any other, as the tramp said about using Pears' Soap. Fire ahead!"

"It's about Adelaide," Winona went on; "that is, it's about her apartment."

"I should think it would be rather fun to have an apartment that was almost all yours," Louise said. "If she lived in a house with a lot of sisters and

Digitized by Google

brothers and things she might feel sad. The way she is, she practically is the head of things."

"Yes," reminded Winona, "with all the work to do that goes with it. But that isn't what I wanted to talk to you about. Louise, suppose you wanted to make a lot of furniture look nice, and you hadn't the money, what would you do?"

Louise did not hesitate a moment.

"I'd earn it," she announced. "There are lots of ways."

"What ways, for Adelaide?"

"Why, the canning," said Louise. "Don't you remember what a howling success she made of the canned things at camp? Why can't she go on with it?"

"I don't see how she is going to have the time."

Louise yawned.

"Do you want your little sisters of the Camp Fire to offer to go over and do the housework for her?" she demanded.

"Not a bit of it," said Winona. "I want you to figure out some way that she can manage to make her place look nice."

"Invite me to come there. I'd make any place I was in look perfectly charming," said Louise frivolously.

"Well, she couldn't very well use you for a per-

Digitized by Google

manent decoration," protested Winona. "Come, Louise, be serious."

"I'd have to go and look the ground over," said Louise. Which was exactly what Winona had been working for.

"Will you go and help me look it over tomorrow?" she demanded, striking while the iron was hot.

"All right," Louise agreed.

So next day after school they went.

Louise helped with the curtains to such good effect that they had them done in an hour more. Then the three sat down to plan ways and means.

Louise presently looked up with an intelligent expression.

"Adelaide, did I hear you say this carpet couldn't be worse?" she wanted to know.

"You certainly did," Adelaide responded vigorously. "Don't you think it's true?"

"Well, I don't very well see how it could be," Louise admitted. "On that principle, why don't you let me see what I can do with it?"

"'Anything on earth you want to," Adelaide offered generously.

Louise jumped up.

"Then you two wait here, and I'll be back presently. Only you have to promise to keep people off

Digitized by Google

ADELAIDE AND WINONA WATCHED LOUISE FASCINATEDLY

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

it till I'm through. And please sweep it hard till I come back."

Very much mystified, the girls got the broom and conscientiously took turns sweeping it till Louise returned, which was in about fifteen minutes. All that sweeping had taken most of the dust out of it, though they were both surprised at the amount of dust one elderly carpet can accumulate in the course of time.

Louise, on her return, left mysteriously for the kitchen, where they heard her fussing about for a little while longer. They swept faithfully on.

"Now you can stop," she said regally, appearing in a big apron, with a dishpan full of some dark fluid in one hand, poised on her hip, and a wide paintbrush in the other.

"What are you going to do?" they asked her together.

Louise looked up at the room.

"Dye the carpet a pleasant dark green," she informed them. "This dishpan has just twenty cents' worth of diamond dye in it, and I don't see why your carpet shouldn't be all right, once I've lavished a few attentions on it."

Adelaide and Winona, perched on the sofa very much as if it was a desert island, watched Louise fascinatedly as she methodically dipped her brush into the hot dye and swept it down the breadths of carpet. She

Digitized by Google

stirred it a good deal to see that it kept even, and worked as neatly as she knew how.

But, alas, she had not calculated on the amount of dye that a life-sized carpet can absorb. When she had used every drop in her dishpan there was a charming tract of dull-green carpet, with a figure showing through just enough to look well. She had dyed the best and nappiest of the carpet first, and there was a strip down one side where people's feet trod most—the worst of it—that still showed the faded dahlias and cabbage-roses Adelaide so hated.

"I must go out and get more dye," she announced undaunted. And she did.

But, alas! again. By some miscalculation the dye she mixed the second time did not in the least match the first panful. She painted over it, and she worked it in scientifically, and she burrowed and toiled till she was flushed a deep scarlet all over except where she had green streaks. But no amount of ingenuity or science would make the carpet look like anything but two kinds of carpet.

She dropped the brush and looked up at the two girls despairingly.

"I'm dreadfully sorry, Adelaide," she wailed. "I've ruined your carpet."

But Adelaide shook her head.

"There wasn't anything you could do to that car-

Digitized by Google

pet that could make it any worse than it was," she told her friends. "I told you that before you started, Lou."

"I feel a little better," Louise answered. But she continued to sit on an island of partly dry carpet and look desolately at the wreck she had made.

"What on earth is the matter?" demanded Lonny Hughes, bursting into the room where the three girls were sitting, silently regarding the catastrophe.

Adelaide waved her hand in the direction of Louise.

"We've been trying to do things to the carpet, and——"

"And I've messed it," Louise finished.

Lonny looked at the situation for a minute longer.

"Not one bit," he said. "What you want to do is to cut out all that darker part you've spoiled, and use the carpet like a rug in the middle of the floor. That part was too badly worn to be any good, anyhow."

They listened to him with admiration. Such a simple answer, and nobody had thought of it!

"I'll stain the floor," he went on. "Here, we'd better rip up that part that's done badly, so it won't stain through. I don't see why none of us ever thought to fix things up before."

While they sat fascinated Lonny took out tacks and sawed off breadths scientifically, and finally car-

Digitized by Google

ried the carpet out into the back yard beneath the apartment, where he stretched it out on the ground and left it to finish drying.

"Now if you'll scrub this floor good and clean I'll stain it any color you say," he offered. "If you do it now it will be dry enough to paint tomorrow morning, and I'll get up early to do it."

"Will we do it?" demanded Louise joyfully. "Here's where I get a chance to atone for my past life."

She ran for the scrubbing brush, and Winona, struck by a fine thought, went home and got more. The three girls made short work of the floor.

"There," Adelaide said with satisfaction, "that looks nice enough to eat off of, as the old lady at the red farmhouse used to say last year."

They went down, before they left, to give the dyed carpet one last fond look. It seemed to be doing very well, drying evenly and straight. They escorted Lonny to the paint store, and saw that he bought dull brown stain. Then they went back to their own houses with a sense of having put in a good day's work.

Louise, once she was started at anything, was a demon of energy.

"The next thing is the chairs," she told the others when she met them before the schoolhouse next morning.

Digitized by Google

"We can't dye those; they're too far gone," said Winona decidedly.

"Would cretonne to cover them cost very much?" Louise asked meekly.

"Cretonne—can you cover chairs with cretonne?" Adelaide demanded in excitement.

"Of course you can," Louise and Winona informed her in a breath. "They're just the thing to match your haircloth sofa," went on Louise. "I asked mother about that, and she says they are very fashionable, and hard to get now. So I think what you ought to do would be to make a quaint-looking room out of it, if you can."

"I have some cretonne," said Adelaide.

"Where did you get it?" they wanted to know.

"I didn't get it," she answered. "I have always had it. At least I think it's cretonne. A while ago a very old aunt of mine, that I never saw, died and left me her best old-fashioned bed. It was a great big thing, and father looked at it when it came and said the best thing to do would be to sell it to an antique dealer and put the money in bank for me, because you couldn't very often find a house with high enough ceilings to put in it, and anyway it almost would fill up a room by itself. So he did, and he got quite a lot for it, and it's in the bank for me now. But they didn't want the curtains, and I have

Digitized by Google

them in a box under my bed. There was such lots and lots of curtain-stuff, quite fresh. I'll get it out, and we'll see if it would look well on the chairs. It was a queer old pattern with little birds all over it."

So as soon as they could they explored the room, in great excitement, for the cretonne. It proved to be a very quaint old pattern indeed, all birds of paradise and fanlike fronds of dull-green palm on a creamy background. And they thought there was enough for the living-room chairs and a straight strip of curtain across the top of each window and down the sides.

"The thing for you to do is to have a bee," Louise said decisively.

"'Oh, yes, of course we have honey—why, we keep a bee!'" quoted Adelaide in a faint attempt to stave off the evil day.

"Now, that won't do you any good," said Louise. "What's going to happen is that Camp Karonya is going to be invited over here some evening soon to make curtains and upholster chairs and fix things generally. It's going to be a real Camp evening."

Adelaide protested again, faintly, that she wanted to wait till things were as they should be before the girls were asked.

But they talked to her, and asked her if she thought that really was the true Camp Fire spirit, and she

Digitized by Google

finally admitted that it wasn't, and promised to have the girls over as soon as she could. And that was in three nights.

She had asked them to come in their middies and bloomers, because it was to be a real camping-out party. She did not ask any Blue Birds, for the simple reason that the room would not hold as many people as that.

The afternoon of the party Adelaide, naturally, had to stay home and tidy up. The green carpet, or, rather, the green rug, as it was now, was nailed down, and the brown-stained floor had a very dressed-up look. The curtains were up too, and the overdrapery of flowered chintz. She and the other two girls had seen to that.

The others—Roger, Tom, Billy, Winona, and Louise—had acquired Louise's father's car for the occasion, and spent the afternoon afield, picking goldenrod and all the other things of the sort they could find to decorate the apartment. They filled it with flowers, massed over the mantel and by the fireplace and in every other place where flowers could be tucked. The boys were not asked for the bee, but they were told they could come in a little later, in time for the things to eat.

Mrs. Bryan, who was naturally one of the guests, had brought a gigantic pair of shears with her, and several papers of tacks, and some business-like-looking

Digitized by Google

needles and stout thread. She set to work as soon as she came, measuring the chairs and cutting out the covers. Then she pinned them in place as well as she could, and for the rest of the time supervised the girls as they put in the tacks and added the gimp. There were five chairs, and a queer old settee that also seemed to cry aloud for covering. It took them most of the evening.

Adelaide had been prevailed upon by the others not to prepare any refreshments. She had wanted to very badly, but they had coaxed her not to. As the time came when the refreshments would have been in order, and the busy girls straightened themselves out a little, and went and washed their dusty hands, and otherwise seemed to be looking for food, she looked more and more distressed. And just about that time the boys walked in.

On the arm of the foremost boy, Lonny, was a large basket. The next one, Billy, bore another one. The others scurried out after plates and cups, and produced from their baskets a large amount of those infant frankfurters known as "weenies," not to speak of bread and mustard and ginger ale. They cleared the girls unceremoniously away from the fire, and, producing long sticks, began to toast and generally arrange the weenies. They split the rolls they had brought, stuck the weenies inside—and behold, refreshments!

Digitized by Google

"Where did you get all this?" Adelaide demanded of her brother, pushing her red-brown hair back.

"Oh, all the boys were in it," he said. "They said that the Camp Karonya girls had done so many nice things for them that they thought turn about was only fair play. So we clubbed together and bought the things."

He did not add—indeed, he couldn't, because he didn't know—that it had been a soft suggestion of Louise's to Billy and Tom that had done it. But everybody was happy, and, as the country papers say, "a pleasant time was had."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER EIGHT

ADELAIDE's furniture bee was a great success. The next day after it was over the three girls took one look at the wall paper, and decided that no amount of restoration would have any effect on it. There would simply have to be new paper. And Adelaide decided that she would simply have to wait and earn money for it.

After that things went along in a quiet enough way. Camp Karonya held one or two meetings, the pageant rehearsals went on, school continued, and Roger stayed a week with the Merriams, then went, rather against his will, and visited Billy Lee. He was making plans to do something to support himself. They wanted him to stay in the town where they were, because he had made friends with them, and it seemed a sensible thing to do. Dr. Hope said that his memory might come back at any time. Meanwhile the authorities in England had been communicated with, and there was nothing more to do about it. They were all very fond of the boy, and Winona kept her little book carefully, with all the stray memories he had written down in it.

"But, you know," he said to the other boys and girls, who were sitting on the Lees' porch one night,

Digitized by Google

"I can't go on like this. I must get something to do. I feel perfectly strong and well now, and I should go to work."

"What are you thinking of doing?" Mrs. Lee asked him.

Roger looked perplexed.

"That's just it. I don't know."

Nobody else seemed to know, either. Louise buried her hands in her curly red hair and thought hard. Winona and Tom stared at each other, and Billy, as was his wont when he was puzzling anything out, nibbled the nearest thing at hand, which happened to be a pencil. Nataly Lee, Billy's sister, leaned back in the hammock which she was occupying and looked up at the stars. But no thoughts came forth.

"Well?" said Roger finally.

"I can't think—can you?" said Louise.

"Thought never was my long suit," Billy said plaintively. "But we've just got to this time."

So they thought some more.

"What can you do?" Louise asked practically after a moment.

Roger looked serious.

"Nothing much that is useful. I don't think I ever had to."

"Do you feel as if you were ever going to have to?" Nataly wanted to know. Nataly had a romantic

Digitized by Google

theory that Roger might turn out to be the missing heir to a dukedom, being very fond of romantic novels.

"No," he replied slowly. "I don't. I don't believe I was going to have to. But I do now, whether I did or not, and I'm going to. Let me see. I seem to know more Latin than any of you chaps. I fancy I've been studying it ever since I was a kiddie. Do you suppose I could coach anybody——"

"Why, yes, I think you could," said Mrs. Lee. She was a sweet-faced woman, very much, in speech and action, like her son Billy. Nataly was very unlike her mother and brother, one of those people who don't seem to fit in with their families. She liked novels and lying around and she had a devotion to her complexion which prevented her from going out very much or having any boy-and-girl good times, of the kind where you are bound to get sunburned.

"But coaching wouldn't be enough to support you, by itself," Mrs. Lee went on, "unless you got a very great deal to do. I am afraid there will have to be something else."

They were quiet again, until Louise spoke up.

"I don't know whether you'd like the idea of it, Roger, but you could deliver papers. The Press office wants someone to do that, on a bicycle. It wouldn't take you more than a part of the day, and you'd have the rest for coaching, if you could get it to do."

Digitized by Google

"It isn't a question of whether I'd like the idea," said Roger very sensibly. "It's a question of getting something to do that will keep me till my memory comes back."

"You know we're only too glad to have you stay with us, Roger," Mrs. Lee offered, patting his hand.

"And we too," said Winona.

"I know it," said Roger, "but I can't do that, kind as you all are. And I think Louise's suggestion is a very good one. I'll go down and see about it to-morrow, and ask the principal at the school about the coaching. I'm sure I could help beginners, at least."

"There's something else," Winona offered slowly. "That is, if you won't stay with us."

"It isn't that I don't want to," explained Roger, "it's only that I think I shouldn't, for several reasons. If I do stay here, or at your house, Winnie, I know I'll want to join in with all the good times that all of you have. And if I do that I can't work. It's all right to do things after my work is done. What is it, Winnie?"

"Why—it's Old Mary's."

"Where we went on that picnic last Spring?" Nataly asked.

"Yes," answered Winona. "It wouldn't be too far from town on a bicycle, and I was out there a day or so ago. And she said that she was getting too old to live all alone out in that little house of hers, and she

Digitized by Google

"wished she knew of some kind lad that would stay there with her, and do chores that were too heavy for her."

"I've never been there, have I?" asked Roger.

"No," they told him.

"What is it like?" he asked.

"Well," said Winona, "Old Mary is a washerwoman——"

"A sort of superwasherwoman," Billy interposed. "She gets fancy prices, and rolls in money."

"She is a very good one," said Mrs. Lee. "She's a nice old Irishwoman who lives in this little house out by the picnic ground, a couple of miles away. She sells things to picnickers, and washes. She's quite a character. Most people like her. And if she really would like to have you live with her, and you think you would like it too, it seems as good a plan as any. That is, if you insist on being so independent."

"I think I must," Roger answered with true British obstinacy. "You see, it may not be for long. Surely I'll find out something more about myself before many more months. And while I'm waiting to, this is the best thing."

"We'll go out to-morrow then," Tom said. "Or would you rather go alone, Roger?"

"No, I'd rather you went along," Roger answered. "And Louise, too,——"

Digitized by Google

"It wasn't I that Mary told about it, it was Winona," Louise interposed. "But I'd be glad to go, too, if asked politely."

So the next day the party took the trolley for Old Mary's.

They found her at the washtub, with her sleeves rolled up, hard at work. But she was none the less cheerful and ready to stop her work to talk to them.

"And how is it with you, my dears?" she asked. "Is it a picnic you've come on? Sure it isn't a day that I can stop and cook things for yez—I've three washes to get out by night, and the firewood to carry in, and the heavens alone knows what else to do."

"We haven't come on a picnic," answered Winona, who was Old Mary's favorite, because she went out there oftener than the others did. "We've come on business."

Old Mary laughed.

"Business, is it? And what sort of business? Ye haven't found the boy I was askin' for, have ye? Sure they say you can git anybody anything they want, Miss Winnie. It's the grand intelligence office keeper you'd make."

"That's on account of that kitten clearing-house you ran at Camp Karonya," Louise interposed. "I always told you that would stick, Winnie."

"Well, they were very nice kittens, and I'm very

Digitized by Google

glad I didn't let the poor things get drowned," said Winona stoutly. "And I have found you somebody to stay with you, Mary. At least, if you both want to do it."

"It is I," said Roger, stepping nearer to her.

Old Mary looked at him critically. Mary was not an American, any more than Roger was.

"But it's a young gentleman ye are," she exclaimed, "and not even an American young gentleman. Ye're quality, my dear. What would ye be doin' me chores fer yer board fer? Didn't Miss Winnie tell you what it was I wanted?"

"Yes," said Roger. The others slipped away to a little distance, so that Mary and Roger could talk better. "And that's just what I want to do. You see, I'm in trouble, and I have to earn my living."

Old Mary looked interested. She sat down comfortably on the chair nearest her, and motioned Roger to another one.

"Well, well—in trouble, is it? And what kind of trouble would it be that would make ye here in Amerikу, with no money?"

"I think it was the war," Roger answered.

Then he told her his story, and what his plans were.

"Well, well, and it's the sad time ye've been havin'," she exclaimed. "And it was Miss Winnie that

Digitized by Google

found ye. And isn't she an angel from heaven now to do it? There's mighty few like Miss Winnie."

"That's true enough," said Roger. "They've been very good to me. I'd been having a pretty hard time up to the day they found me."

"And ye want to stay with me and do the chores? Indeed and ye'll be welcome—if ye're strong enough. I'll be glad. Onst when I was young I was a nurse up at the big house in Lissavar in Ireland, where I was bred. It'll be like old times, havin' English quality in the house with me."

The others could plainly see that Roger's old-country accent and "quality" manners had made an impression on Mary's heart that would ensure him a very good time with her.

"We're not going to be anywhere with you after this, are we, Mary?" said Winona mischievously. "We're nothing but plain Americans."

Old Mary laughed.

"Sure ye know there's love enough in me heart to go 'round. Not that I deny it's good to hear me own speech again, and the little up-an-comin' ways I was used to when I was a colleen. Thank ye, Miss Winnie, fer the lad ye've brought me. And when can ye be comin' to stay with me, Master Roger?"

Roger thought a moment.

"I haven't so much to pack that it will take long,"

Digitized by Google

he said, laughing. "But I do want a day to see about the paper and the bicycle and the Latin. I have to earn my living, you know, Mary," he reminded her.

"Arrah, and it's the sad day," said Mary, who plainly thought that anyone of Roger's "quality" charms should be pensioned by the community in recognition of them. "But cheer up. We'll soon be findin' all about ye. It can't stay long away."

There was no difficulty about the paper route, but there was about the bicycle. The Press people were willing to loan Roger a bicycle for the hours morning and evening when he was delivering for them, but they wanted it for someone else during other hours. This seemed like rather a setback.

"I think you'll have to put your pride in your pocket, Roger, and let somebody loan you the money," said Tom finally. "Come now, wouldn't you do as much for a brother Scout yourself?"

Roger demurred, but at last this line of reasoning convinced him, and he let the Scouts make up a purse for him, to be paid back as soon as possible. He found that he could buy a very good second-hand bicycle for fifteen dollars.

So next day he packed up a change of clothing that he had borrowed from Tom, and one or two other little things, and rode down to Old Mary's. He came back that night, after he had finished his first day with

Digitized by Google

the papers, to report to the Merriams, who quite felt that they owned him.

"Well, old sport, how is it?" Tom called as soon as they saw him pedalling along.

Roger jumped off his bicycle and sat down on the steps, while the others clustered around him eagerly.

"Not bad a bit," he answered cheerily. "Only—" he stopped to laugh, "I don't believe I'm going to be able to stay with Mary."

"Why not?" they asked.

"She's too good to me," he answered. "I remind her so much of the 'quality' at home that she feels as if I shouldn't bring in the wood or help her any way at all. If I can't I shall simply have to leave her, that's all."

"Tell her so, and it will bring her to terms on the spot," Tom counselled. "I could see by the way she looked at you that she thought you were very valuable."

"But what about the rest?" Winona wanted to know.

"The papers? Oh, that's not bad a bit. Do you know, I fancy I've been working pretty hard back there, before the time I forgot. I wonder if I could have been carrying despatches? Going around delivering things seemed so natural."

"Shouldn't wonder," said Tom, while Winona got

Digitized by Google

out her notebook and made the inevitable entry. "What about the coaching?"

"There's one kid I think I can get. Let's see. I have the day running on a schedule. I can get through the work at Mary's by nine, or ten at the most. I don't think I shall be able to deliver morning papers, only the evening ones. That will leave me time for a couple of hours of coaching. After I get home I can do some more things for Mary. If she only wouldn"t fight everything I try to do so, it would be lots easier."

"Just bully her," advised Tom. "If the quality insists on doing the chores she will just have to do what the quality says."

"Very good," Roger answered.

"And you're sure you're comfortable?" Winona insisted on knowing.

"Quite," he answered. "I shall be a little more so when I have paid back what the Scouts loaned me for the bicycle."

"Oh, you're too conscientious!" Winona lamented. "Do try to forget what you owe the Scouts, and get yourself some more clothes. I'm sure you need them."

"Oh, I'll get enough for that too," Roger assured her.

Then he jumped on his bicycle and rode off.

"I do hope he remembers soon," said Winona.

Digitized by Google

"I think he will, sooner or later," her mother told her. "It's a pity he can't go to school," she continued.

"I don't know," said Winona. "It mightn't do him any good, the things he knew were so different from the way we study. He might get all mixed up. And anyway," she added, "there *are* times when I wish there wasn't any school. It does get so tiresome."

Her mother looked at her a little concernedly.

"Winona, I think you are doing too much. What with your school work and your Camp Fire you had enough, and you have been going over and helping Adelaide Hughes a good deal lately. You must drop something, or you will be worn out before the school year is well under way."

Winona stretched her arms up over her head, and yawned. "Well, I do wish sometimes there wasn't any school," she insisted.

Tom, beside her, laughed.

"Remember what happened to Louise, Win. Look out for the goblins!"

"Oh, I haven't any trained goblins," laughed Winona. "They all belong to Louise."

And then Louise ran up.

"Winona, oh, Winona! Have you heard?"

Winona sprang up.

"No—what is it?" she demanded. "What has happened?"

Digitized by Google

"Oh, don't be frightened, it isn't so very bad," Louise assured her, pushing back her hair and sitting down to get her breath. Louise was rather plump, and running made her out of breath too easily. "It's only that they've quarantined the school!"

Tom gave a howl that could be heard a block away.

"Did you ever hear anything like that! And she says she hasn't any trained goblins!"

Louise looked bewildered.

"What are you talking about, Tom? I never said I wanted school to close. As a matter of fact, I didn't. And anyway, I'm cured of wishing."

Tom laughed again.

"Winona isn't. She was just saying she was tired of school—and lo and behold!"

"Children, that's dangerously near superstition," warned Mrs. Merriam. "Winona's wish had no more to do with school closing than Louise's had to do with your finding Roger."

"I know it hadn't, mother," said Tom, "but it certainly was funny."

"It isn't a bad thing for Winona," said her mother. "She's been going a little too hard, even for her. I don't know exactly what to do about it."

"But you always think," said Winona affectionately. "I know that in a day or so you'll tell me just what to do about it, see if you don't."

Mrs. Merriam looked thoughtful.

Digitized by Google

"I wonder if——" she began to say, and shut her lips.

"There's something coming," said Winona, but her mother said no more.

The next day they found out what the "something" was.

Running home from a game of tennis with Louise, she found Mrs. Bryan talking to her mother very earnestly.

"It would do them all good," she was saying, "but there's only room for Helen and Winona and one more girl. I suppose it ought to be Adelaide."

"Oh, do tell me!" Winona cried. "What is it?"

"It's a cottage up in New England for a month," said Mrs. Bryan at once.

All the girls loved Mrs. Bryan, who combined being a Guardian with being a very charming person, and they had found out that any plans she suggested were apt to be exceedingly nice ones.

"Do you think the quarantine will be on that long?" asked Mrs. Merriam.

"I'm sure of it."

"Where did the cottage come from?" asked Winona, almost dancing up and down, like a small girl, in her astonishment.

"It belongs to a friend of mine who took it till November," explained Mrs. Bryan. "She has been suddenly called away, and won't be able to get back

Digitized by Google

till the end of the month. She says I can have it till then. And it seems to me that if I went up there with Helen and you and somebody else—it isn't a very big cottage—and we shared expenses and did the housework we could have a very restful time. Your mother wants you to go badly. I think myself you need it. Of course Helen will go with me. The only question is between Louise Lane and Adelaide Hughes. Louise is perfectly strong and well, and you three girls are chums; but Adelaide needs it more."

"What does Helen think?" Winona asked.

Here she is—she can speak for herself," said Mrs. Merriam, as Helen's figure loomed up in the doorway.

"Who is your choice for the third member of the party, Helen?"

"Well, I don't want to be horrid," said Helen, coming in and dropping on the carpet cross-legged, camp-fire fashion, "but nice as Adelaide is she's a little bit whiny. Now Louise, bless her heart, is cheerful from the time she gets up till she goes to bed. If we're going to get rested ourselves—and Nannie seems to think we need it—Louise is the person to take along. She's the original Little Ray of Sunshine. Of course, I suppose it might be good for Adelaide to go off and not have to live in the flat she hates so for a while."

"It's a question of having somebody you want or somebody you can help, in other words," said Mrs.

Digitized by Google

Bryan. "Well, girls, I'm not going to bias you. Choose which ever of the two you want."

"Oh, please don't put it that way," said Winona dismayedly. "It makes it sound very uncomfortable."

"Well, I'll tell you what I think," said Mrs. Merriam decidedly. "Winona has been trying to make Adelaide have a good time all summer. As far as I can make out she is always helping her and trying to make her see things the nice sunny way the rest of the girls do. She's tired herself, lately, showing Adelaide how to do things that Adelaide might have thought out for herself if she hadn't been so occupied in thinking how wrong things were. Now I want my little girl to have a rest, and I don't think she'll get it as long as Adelaide is within helping distance. And if there's anything in Adelaide Hughes at all she can learn to be efficient and happy without being all the time pulled along by the rest of the Camp Fire."

Mrs. Merriam did not often lay down the law, but when she did people listened.

"I wonder?" said Mrs. Bryan finally. "Yes—I believe you are right."

"I know I am right," Mrs. Merriam said. "The other thing is putting a premium on mournfulness and weakness. It's all right to help, but not to carry."

"You're more experienced than I," said Mrs. Bryan. Mrs. Bryan was twenty-seven, which seemed very old indeed to the girls; but as Winona listened

Digitized by Google

she realized that after all her mother was older and wiser than Helen's stepmother. "Well, that settles it. "We'll take Louise."

The other girls looked relieved. They liked Adelaide, but she certainly was mournful.

Something happened that nobody ever knew about till long, long after. Adelaide Hughes had come by on her way from seeing one of the other girls, and had come up on the Merriam porch. As she was about to come in she heard what Mrs. Bryan said, and stopped, not knowing whether to go away again or go on in. She heard all that they said, and then—well, then she didn't feel especially like going in. She tiptoed off the porch, flushed and angry. She went home and cried for a long time. Then, after she had cried as much as she could, she began to think. Adelaide was a pretty fair-minded person. And the more she thought about it the more she realized that what Mrs. Merriam had said was true. She had been clinging to Winona for help and cheerfulness, and not making any especial effort to manufacture them for herself. To be sure, she did have a harder life than the other girls, but then—well, as a matter of fact there are no excuses that you can really make yourself accept, nor any that really make people think everything is all right.

"And so I've missed a lovely trip by yowling around," said Adelaide severely to herself. "Well, here's where I stop yowling!"

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER NINE

Mrs. Bryan, Helen, Winona and Louise started for the cottage in New England in two days. They did not want to waste any time, because there was the possibility that the quarantine might be lifted earlier than they expected, in which case the girls would have to hurry back to school.

It was a delightful place. It was a little low old wooden house painted white and green, with porches all around it, and the beach on one side. On the other sides were the road that led down to the village, and a pine wood.

"Now," said Mrs. Bryan when they had arrived, and chosen which should room where, "we will divide the work up, and each do her share, very much as we did at camp. And I don't want to see anybody doing more than her share, please let me state."

"I won't," said Louise meekly. Louise, by the way, wasn't given to it.

"Well, we won't either," said Helen and Winona. "Which takes what, Nannie?"

"Take your choice," Mrs. Bryan said.

"Let's each get a meal and clear away one," offered Helen. "Not the same meal."

"And what shall I do?" asked her stepmother.

Digitized by Google

"Why, if you keep the house clean and do the marketing that will be enough, I think," said Helen.

So they divided it that way. Louise, who was naturally an early riser, rose and made the breakfast, which Helen cleared away. Winona got the midday dinner, Louise cleared it up, Helen got supper and Winona attended to the supper dishes. So each girl had a light meal and a heavy one to look after, and the work seemed like scarcely anything at all.

For the first two or three days they did not do anything at all to speak of. They just loafed. Then they discovered that there were blueberries in the pinewoods, and black raspberries, miraculously preserved, and took to picking them and making blueberry pies, and that New England confection, blueberry muffins. They went down to the village store presently, in a lazy manner, and dreamily bought green silkoline and made pine pillows. They went in bathing when it was warm enough, which wasn't often.

And they all slept in the woods and on the sand and in the Gloucester hammocks which hung all over the generous porches, and were far, far too lazy for any good use. Once in a while they roused themselves and wrote letters home, but not so very often. There didn't seem much to say, except, "I am eating a good deal, and the weather is nice." Once Louise did wake up enough to write back to the Camp Fire

Digitized by Google

and give it a stirring account of how they slept most of the time and ate during the rest, but in general things were so peaceful that it was uncanny.

"There's isn't a thing to eat in the house," said Mrs. Bryan despairingly. "Children, we are going to have to live on canned salmon till to-morrow morning. This wretched town, or village, or whatever it is, closes all its stores all day Tuesday, and expects you to know it by telepathy."

She sank down in the nearest hammock, and mournfully put her feet up. She had come back from the mile walk to the village, which she had put off till it was cool. Sometimes it was still a little too warm in the mornings. "I managed to get a loaf of bread from the bakery woman by bullying her. She acted as if I were taking it out of her children's mouths at that. But I don't see what we are going to do for dinner and supper."

"Get the spindle and the distaff ready, and the Lord will send the flax," said Louise cheerfully, quoting a Camp Fire motto which belonged to one of the other girls.

"Well, we have the canned salmon for dinner, or dried beef."

"I don't like canned salmon, and Winnie hates dried beef," said Helen, mournfully also, "but there's nothing else for it."

Digitized by Google

Louise sat up and began to talk, quite animatedly for her these days.

"Once I had a cousin," said she.

"What happened to it?" asked Helen frivolously. "Did it die?"

"No, but I left it out in the rain and it got spoiled," Louise answered her, also frivolously. "See here, Helen, I was starting to offer you a perfectly wonderful suggestion, and you side-track me like that. As I was saying, once I had a cousin. It was a woman-cousin, and mother checked me there, as if I was a suit-case, while she went to Florida or some such painful place. I don't see why I wouldn't have looked nice in Florida, but the dear ones at home didn't see it that way.

"Well, my cousin was married, and she had a little girl about four, and a husband. I don't remember much about him, because he only came home nights, and mostly I went to bed when that happened. He was very, very thin, and dreadfully long, and sad-looking. I didn't blame him one bit."

"I don't see where the suggestion comes in," said Helen, wriggling with impatience.

"If you wait you will," Louise told her calmly. "Patience is a virtue you ought to cultivate, dearest. Well, my cousin was a vegetarian. At least, she said she wasn't, because she didn't eat more than one or

Digitized by Google

two vegetables. But then she didn't eat more than one or two of everything. Anyway, she thought it was dreadful to eat meat, so of course she didn't know good meat from the horrid kind. Once in a while, as a great treat, the husband and I had a potroast. Poor soul—he *was* thin! Well—here's where the suggestion comes in—what do you suppose we had on specially fine days, like Christmas and New Year's and Easter?"

"Hash," said Winona, opening one eye and entering into the conversation dreamily.

"Nothing so good or true," Louise told them. They were all very much interested by this time. "When holidays came around, dear Yolande—nice name, Yolande, don't you think?—would go happily out and buy about a barrel of lovely nuts, and some cornmeal, and kitchen bouquet. And she'd ruin all those nuts by running them through a chopper, and she'd mess them up with the other things to stick them together. She had a recipe in a book. And then she'd model the result till it looked like a turkey, and bake it. And we—poor things! we'd eat it."

"What was it like?" Winona asked curiously.

"Well, it didn't taste like nuts," Louise answered her cautiously, "and it wasn't much like cornmeal, and it wasn't so very much like kitchen bouquet. And I give you my word it wasn't a bit like turkey. It was horrid, that's all it was."

Digitized by Google

"Poor Louise!" said Winona commiseratingly, for Louise did very much enjoy what she had to eat. "But what is the suggestion?"

"Well, why don't we take a lot of blueberries and cornmeal, and some kitchen bouquet, and mix 'em up, and let Helen model us some chops? She models very nicely. What do you think?"

Here Helen threw a pillow at her.

"That's not a bad idea one bit," said Winona with her usual common sense. I think we'd do well to leave the kitchen bouquet out, and we haven't any anyway. But if we have a big blueberry pudding for dinner, with lots of hard sauce, I don't see why we need much else."

So that settled it. Winona got out of her hammock and went in and made a monster pudding, and they had that and beans and hot chocolate for dinner. It was not what you would have called a balanced menu, but it tasted exceedingly good.

After the clearing up the girls went to sleep again. It was a misty, drowsy sort of day.

About five Louise sat up in her hammock and began to think about going in and having a bath. And as she sat up a lovely sight gladdened her eyes. Three dark-browed men in red shirts, with long strings of fish, were approaching.

"Hi! is that fish for sale?" she called to them.

Digitized by Google

"No for sale," answered the foremost man. "We give you."

Louise jumped joyfully out of the hammock and ran to them.

"Thanks ever so much," she cried, and accepted the fishes on the spot. She carried them back to the porch, and waved them triumphantly at the others.

"Here's our supper, not to speak of our breakfast to-morrow morning," she exulted.

The others got up and were pleased, as well they might be.

"Won't you let us pay you?" Mrs. Bryan asked again.

"No, but you give us a sharp knife, we clean them," said the spokesman again.

They looked at the men. They were most fearful-looking creatures, more like pirates, with their gold earrings and red shirts, than anything they had ever seen. But still, they had been kind about the fish. Louise jumped up and ran in, and came out again with the biggest butcher-knife, which she handed the first man.

"Thanks," he said—and instead of cleaning the fish, they turned and walked away to a little distance.

"Oh, I'm frightened!" Louise whispered, clinging to Helen's hand.

Digitized by Google

"Nonsense!" said Helen stoutly. "What is there to be frightened at?"

"Well, I think there's lots," said Louise. "Men like that, trotting off with our butcher-knife——"

At this point the men came back again.

"You let us come in your house, have supper, stay all night?" the speaker asked.

Louise clutched Mrs. Bryan hard.

"No, no, no!" she whispered. "Please don't let them come in!"

"We'll cook your supper for you and give it to you," said Mrs. Bryan calmly, "but we can't let you in. We haven't any room."

At this the Portuguese talked to each other a little, rather crossly, and went back to the shore and sat down.

"Oh, what do you think?" asked Louise.

"I think that it would be a good thing if we had some men here," said Mrs. Bryan quietly. "Helen, while you cook the fish, Winnie had better slip down to the village by the path that the men can't see, and try to get somebody to come stay with us. These men may be all right, or they may want to steal."

Louise turned white, but Winnie got up quietly and slipped on her sport-coat.

"I'll be as quick as I can," she said.

She hurried down the path that led to the village. There was a telephone, she knew, at a house about a

Digitized by Google

half mile away, and she thought if she could get to that and call up the village store-postoffice she could secure somebody.

As she hurried along it began to get darker and darker. There was a thunder-storm coming up. She pulled her collar up round her ears, and untied her broad black hair-ribbon from its bow behind, and bound it around her head, to keep off some of the rain. But the rain did not mind hair-ribbons at all. Fortunately for her, Winona was not one of those people who are made nervous or terrified by thunder and lightning. She rather liked thunderstorms than otherwise, though she would not have chosen outdoors as a place to enjoy them. And it certainly was a very fine specimen of what the New England coast can do in the thunder-storm way. By the time she reached the house she was bound for she was dripping through and through, and the rain was splashing in her shoes as she walked.

"Oh, Mrs. Lodge, may I use your telephone?" she panted, when her third frantic ring had been answered, and the surprised woman of the house stood at her door.

"Good gracious, child, you're wet to the bone!" was all Mrs. Lodge answered. "Isn't this a dreadful storm? Come in quick, before you're struck by lightning."

"Oh, the storm's too far off for anything like that to happen," Winnie answered matter-of-factly. "But there were three dreadful Portuguese over by our

Digitized by Google

house, and I came to see if I could get the village, and ask them to send up one or two men to stay with us till they go away."

"Oh, good gracious!" said Mrs. Lodge again. "How dreadful! How perfectly dreadful! No, indeed, child, I wouldn't dare let you use the telephone. Why, look at this storm—we might all be blown to atoms if you did."

At this unexpected block Winnie caught her breath. She did not know what to do. There were the others down at the little cottage, with the Portuguese, for all she knew, holding them up with their own long knife, and here was she, helpless, at Mrs. Lodge's.

"You could go as far away from the telephone as you liked," she pleaded, "while I used it."

"No," said Mrs. Lodge firmly. "It wouldn't do anybody any good to get my house burned down by lightning. You wait till the storm's over, child, and then we'll telephone. Take your wet things off, and I'll get you some dry ones."

But Winnie, who had set herself gingerly down on the edge of a wooden chair she thought she couldn't damage, got up at this.

"No, thank you," she said. "I must go back. And I wish you would telephone just as soon as you possibly think it would be safe for you to."

Digitized by Google

"I certainly will," Mrs. Lodge promised heartily. "I—oh, mercy, child, there's another peal! You mustn't think of such an awful thing as going out in all this."

"Oh, yes I must," Winona said resolutely. "I would be glad if you'd let me have an umbrella."

She was given the umbrella, together with a great many protests, and started forth again. The rain was a little less bad, for by luck she struck a lull in the storm, and it was not until she had nearly, with her heart beating violently, gained the house, that it burst forth again. She saw nothing of the Portuguese. She tiptoed into the house, scarcely knowing what she expected to see.

Everything seemed all right. Mrs. Bryan, Louise and Helen were sitting quietly in the parlor, waiting for her to come back to have supper.

"What shall we do about giving them some?" whispered Louise, as they sat down to the fish.

"Why, put it on a plate and lay it on the back porch, of course," Mrs. Bryan answered.

"And if they jump out and scalp us—"

"Oh nonsense. That's ridiculous. I don't believe, after all, that they're anything more than poor men who want food and shelter and didn't quite know how to ask for it."

So they sat down and ate the fish, which was very

Digitized by Google

good and fresh, and would have had a very pleasant supper if it hadn't been for the terror of the three men. At least, Louise frankly said she was frightened, and proved it by scarcely eating at all; and the others stopped occasionally in their efforts at conversation, and wondered when the storm would stop.

At length they were through. Mrs. Bryan took the plate, with a whole fish left on it, and went out on the back porch and set it down. When she returned she found the three girls clinging to each other. Even Helen, who ordinarily was very quiet and calm no matter what happened, was shivering and nearly crying.

"Oh, Mother, they're looking in the window! They're looking in the window!" she shuddered.

When Helen called her stepmother anything but "Nannie" it was a sure sign that she was in pretty bad need of consolation.

Mrs. Bryan looked toward the window, where it was dark now. Sure enough, the faces of the three men, crouched close together, could be seen outside the window, peering in.

"Oh, I'm sure he had the knife! Oh, please lock all the doors and windows!" moaned Louise.

Mrs. Bryan was fairly certain that the men meant no harm, but the girls were so thoroughly terrified that she did as they asked. She and Winona, who, though white, was self-controlled, went about and locked all

Digitized by Google

the doors and windows of the crazy little house. Then they went back, and Mrs. Bryan tried to comfort the other two girls.

"They're out under the old dory!" whispered Louise, as though the men could hear from that distance if she spoke aloud.

"We saw them," added Helen a little more quietly.

"Oh, what shall we do?" moaned Louise.

"Do?" said Mrs. Bryan sensibly, "Nothing. Of course I wish we had some man up here with us, but it's more likely than not that the poor souls are just taking shelter from the storm in the nearest place. Now, girls, we can't help matters any by staying up. They can't possibly get in without waking us, at the worst—"

"Oh!" shrieked Louise at this sinister conclusion, "and we need some rest," Mrs. Bryan concluded.

So they went to the rooms they occupied, Helen with her stepmother and Louise and Winona together, but nobody took off their clothes, and not even Louise went to sleep, for awhile.

Presently, however, she yawned, and curled up and said,

"Winona, if you'll stay awake for a minute I think I'll try to sleep. Call me at the end of fifteen minutes, please."

"All right," yawned Winona, propping herself

Digitized by Google

against the foot of the bed in a conscientious effort to stay awake.

But at the end of fifteen minutes, regrettable to state, Winona found herself slipping down from her uncomfortable position.

"I can stay awake just as well this way," she thought hazily, and straightened out. But she couldn't.

The next she knew Louise was bending over her, shaking her.

"Winona! Winona! Wake up!" Louise was saying in a frightened whisper. "They've come back, and brought heaps and heaps of others with them!"

"Wh-at?" Winona yawned sleepily. "Is it time to—to get up?"

"Winona!" called Louise again, and shook her. This time Winona did get up, and remembered the situation.

"Listen!" Louise whispered breathlessly.

They could hear the determined tramp of what sounded to their excited ears like an army, marching up and down the porch. They listened for a few minutes, not daring to move.

"Louise," said Winona at length, "I don't believe that's these Portuguese. Think a minute! I'm sure they had bare feet. And three men couldn't make a noise like a whole army."

"It's the Portuguese," Louise reiterated decidedly.

Digitized by Google

"Well, I'm going to look," said Winona.

And despite Louise's protestations she uncurled herself from the bed. She tiptoed over to the window, and looked down on the little porch. She had to twist a little to do it, and open the window, but she managed. When she had taken one good look she laughed out loud.

"Oh, hush!" hissed Louise.

"Not a bit of it!" said Winona still in her natural voice, and still laughing. "What do you think that is down there? It's all the policemen in the village, which is three, guarding us! I can see the town marshal's star!"

"Oh, thank goodness!" Louise gasped, "Do you suppose they have taken the Portuguese to the jail?"

"I don't know," answered Winona, still peering out, "but evidently Mrs. Lodge telephoned good and hard after the storm let up. Behold the result!"

"Oh, what a wonderful escape!" Louise panted.

Winona lifted her eyebrows, but went downstairs, feeling rather stiff and mussy, to see if the others were there.

She found Helen placidly getting breakfast, though it was not her turn, and Mrs. Bryan distractedly arguing with the head policeman.

"But as far as I know they didn't do a thing," she was explaining. "They seemed strange, and they

Digitized by Google

frightened my girls, so I asked if somebody wouldn't come up and stay the night with us. But I don't want the poor things sent to jail at all. I don't think they meant a bit of harm."

"Well, ma'am, I guess we'd better take them, anyway," said the policeman obstinately. Whereupon he solemnly marched himself, at the head of his three men, to the dory, where the hapless Portuguese were sleeping the sleep of the just, not thinking of any such thing as policemen. In spite of Mrs. Bryan's continued protests, they tipped the dory carefully up, and extracted the Portuguese.

Before the men were carried off, one of them insisted on being left free a minute. After much persuasion the policemen let him go. And he pulled out the large knife that had caused all the trouble, and bestowed it with a polite bow to Mrs. Bryan!

"That settles it," she said. "I know they're nice men. Officer, you simply have to let them go.

The officer looked doubtful.

"Well, if you say so, ma'am," he said finally.

"I do say so," she said. "At least, let them come up to the house, and get something to eat. You can stand guard if you want to."

"Well, we—"

"Come and have breakfast too," said Mrs. Bryan hospitably. And so the end of the whole thing was

Digitized by Google

that the policemen, the Portuguese, and the four inmates of the cottage, sat down amicably to breakfast together. It consisted of the fish the Portuguese had given Mrs. Bryan the night before.

After breakfast Mrs. Bryan got her pocketbook and paid the Portuguese for the fish, and they grinned and bowed and thanked her. And then the policemen marched them off to a safe distance and turned them loose. And so ended the wild and woolly epic of the Fish, the Portuguese and the Policemen, as Winona called it. It was almost the only adventure they had while they were up there. And sometimes Louise would yawn when the days seemed long and sleepy, and say,

"Oh, dear, I wish those Portuguese were back, so we could have an adventure!"

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER TEN

In due time the quarantine was lifted, and the three girls, brown and rosy and cheerful, and ready for any amount of hard work came back to their own town. The Pageant was under way, for the Camp Wah-wah-tay-see, having had very little else to do during the quarantine month, had worked at it for all it was worth. Camp Karonya had rather missed its leaders, but nevertheless a good deal of work had been put through on their parts also, and most of the costumes were under way. They still intended to call it the Pageant of the Fire, but they had made a good many sweeping changes in it.

Louise, coming back so full of energy that school and Camp Fire and her own family duties were only a drop in the bucket, proceeded to follow the example of the Blue Birds and go in heavily for First Aid. She bought a book on bandaging, and spent hours on her porch, or in her own room, bandaging such small brothers and sisters as she could bribe to stand for it. She became so keen on the trail, indeed, that her friends accused her of hoping that some of them would fall down and break something so that she could have a chance at them.

One evening, after a splendid day passed, after

Digitized by Google

school hours, at tennis, there was to be a rehearsal of one of the Pageant scenes that Camp Karonya was in. It was the scene of the Vestal Virgins. They had been working industriously at their costumes, which were lovely, all of fine white cheesecloth, with gilt fillets and girdles. They hung in soft, beautiful folds, and made the girls, most of whom had grown as tall as they ever would, look very grown-up and pretty.

Winona was in her room, putting the finishing touches to her sandals. These had been rather a problem; nobody had seemed to know much about sandals. They had thought at first of buying the regular barefoot sandals that are sold for camp or house wear, but after one pair had been invested in and gilded nobody liked the idea, and it was given up. Besides, it made the thing too expensive, for there were a good many Vestal Virgins. So they had finally descended in a body on the ten-cent-store, and bought slipper soles and gilt and tape, and made them themselves with the aid of the pictures of the Classical Dictionary.

"How goes it?" said Louise cheerily, coming in, as she always did, like a breeze.

"All right," smiled Winona. "I'm on the last sandal."

"Good!" Louise answered. "I haven't started on mine yet."

"Then what on earth have you in that big bag?"

Digitized by Google

Winona wanted to know. "It looks like a whole set of costumes."

"It's my First Aid Kit," Louise announced proudly. "Do you know, Winnie, every morning when I get up, after I've done my gymnastics, I bandage all the bed-posts splendidly! You just ought to see how they look. If they were wounded soldiers I know they'd get well. They're just exactly like the ones in the book."

Winona went on sewing hard. She had one sandal-strap to do, and the gilding, and she hoped to finish both before supper.

"Why don't you stay to supper, Louise?" she asked. "Can't you telephone your mother that you will, and then drop in for your costume at your own house on our way up to rehearsal?"

Louise considered.

"I suppose I could, perfectly well," she conceded. "I don't come on in that scene, anyway, till late, so if you and I don't get there right away on the dot of eight it doesn't really matter."

"You come in on attendance on the Vestal Maxima, don't you?" said Winona.

"Yes. Think of Adelaide getting the gorgeous job of lying in that litter and being a Head Vestal, merely because she's thin, and the boys can carry her better!"

Digitized by Google

"Well, you never can tell what anything's going to do for you," said Winona philosophically. "Adelaide doesn't like being thin a bit. She's only stopped drinking olive oil since the Pageant people picked her out for this part. She says she's going back to it as soon as the Pageant is over."

"Oh, those sandals will do very well indeed the way they are," said Louise impatiently. "Do come and telephone. I'm sure I heard your family calling you to supper."

"So they did," agreed Winona.

She rose and laid down her work, and the two went down. Mrs. Lane was quite willing to have Louise stay to supper, so the two sat down together, and chattered about the Pageant so hard that nobody but Tom, who was one of the litter-carrying slaves, had much chance to talk. As he was going to be painted brown and wear a purple tunic, he felt that he knew quite as much about Vestals as anybody.

"If I hurry I think I can get those sandals done before it is time to go," Winona said. "I don't believe the gilt will be dry so I can take them along and put them on, but anyway they'll be ready for the next time."

"Good gracious, we have heaps and heaps of time," Louise asserted. "Here, I'll sew the straps on that sandal while you gild the other."

Digitized by Google

Winona sat down on a newspaper, put another one over her dress, uncorked the bottle of gilt and went to work.

"Isn't it queer," she remarked, "how nice bananas are, and how you hate the smell of them when it's gilt?"

"It doesn't smell exactly like bananas," said Louise critically. "And I like pencils that taste that way. I always nibble them. The yellow ones are the nicest."

"M'hm," said Winona in a preoccupied voice, splashing gilt all over her sandals. "You sound as if you ate them."

"Here's the other one," Louise said, referring, not to pencils, but the sandals they were working on.

"Thanks..... There, that's done," said Winona finally.

"And we have fifteen minutes yet before we even need to think of starting," Louise said gleefuly. "I'll tell you what, Winona, why don't you let me try some of my bandagings on you? I want to show you how they go."

"If you think you can get them off in time," Winona acceded doubtfully.

"Why, of course I can," said Louise with scorn. "Here, I'll show you."

In a moment she had the only half-willing Winona

Digitized by Google

down on the bed, and her bandages were all over the place. She caught up an umbrella and a small carnival cane from corners of the room and went hard at work.

"But there wouldn't be anybody at all that would need all those bandages," Winona protested plaintively as Louise did a very fine tourniquet on her forehead, and followed it up by a splint on first one arm and then the other.

"That doesn't make one little bit of difference, you goose," Louise explained. "You never can tell. Suppose a shell had struck you. Why, you might be nearly all broken to bits. Then you'd need all this."

"Ugh, how horrid!" Winona protested. "You do have the worst ideas... Look out! You're catching my hair."

"It'll be all right in a hundred years," said Louise sweetly, proceeding to an ankle. A large and fairly patient subject like this had so far been denied her, and she was making the most of it. She went on, in spite of Winona's objections, and, as her supply of bandages and splints was good, in ten minutes her friend was more like a mummy than anything else.

"There!" Louise said proudly, standing off and gazing at her handiwork with an artist's eye, "I never saw anything more complete in my life."

"Neither did I!" said Winona, with a final wriggle.

Digitized by Google

"Ouch! And now that you know you can do it, for goodness sake, Lou, let me out of this. We'll be dreadfully late for rehearsal."

"All right!" said Louise graciously.

She came back to her victim's side and bent over her to remove the first bandage that offered itself, which happened to be the one around her head. Then, with a suggestion of regret, she began on the others.

"Louise! Louise!" called up a voice from below.

"Yes, what is it?" she called back, running to the window.

"Louise, come down a minute!" called Helen. "Tom said you were here, and he said you knew how to make those fillets that look like bridles or something, when they're off, and fit right on your head without any strapping. Have you got one with you?"

"Just a minute, till I untie Winona!" Louise called back.

"Oh, no! You can't wait! Untie Winona afterwards!" Helen replied ruthlessly. She explained afterwards that she was under the impression that Louise had been fastening Winona's Windsor tie, and wanted to do it over again.

"I'll be back in a minute," she called over her shoulder to the helpless Winona, who lay bound fast on the bed—her arms lashed to her sides, her feet quite helpless, and a huge bandage across her chest.

Digitized by Google

Her feet sounded clattering down the stairs.

Winona heard the voices under the window, Louise's among them. They sounded for a few minutes, then died away.

"Louise will be back in a minute now," thought she. But no Louise appeared.

And time, as the story books say, went on—and still no Louise. Gradually the dreadful thought sifted itself into Winona's head that Louise had gone off with Helen, Florence, Tom and the others, and was now, doubtless, happily practicing the graceful carrying of one half of a brazier across the pageant stage, which happened to be her allotted task.

"Mother!" she called.

But Winona's room was on the third story, and unless her mother happened to be coming up the stairs there was not much chance of her being heard. Clay, the negro boy who helped them with the housework, was off this particular day. It looked exceedingly hopeless.

"I hope they don't forget all about me till tomorrow," said Winona with as much of a smile as the bandage which secured a theoretically broken jaw could allow.

She lay there for what seemed to her years longer. It was really about a half hour. Then she heard a quick patter of feet up the stairs, and tried to sit up and see

Digitized by Google

who it was. But she was doomed to disappointment—it was only their family dog, Puppums.

"Oh, Puppums," she said plaintively, "if you were like story book dogs, what a useful puppy you'd be!"

Puppums wagged his tail cheerfully, barked, and sprang up on the bed beside her. Puppums was a sort of fox-terrier, with bull-terrier traces and a streak, so Tom said, of house-cat. He had a loving heart, but he didn't do the traditionally proper dog-things at all. He liked tramps, not as things to eat, but as personal friends. He liked going about and begging from the neighbors, no matter what the neighbors might think of the way he was treated at home. And as for being the kind of faithful hound that dies on graves, why, Pappums didn't see it at all. Neither was there any hope in Winona's mind that on seeing her done up in splints he would grasp the situation, tear the splints off and escort Winona triumphantly to rehearsal. He was not heroic.

"If you'll hold still long enough so that I can slip a note into your collar," said Winona, and was checked by the realization that the only motion permitted her was rolling from the bed to the floor, with the prospect that when she got on the floor she would have to stay there. The only good point to that was that the family might hear the bump. But Puppums did a better thing than he knew. Scrambling up in

Digitized by Google

his usual tempestuous fashion, he alighted squarely in the middle of Louise's best splint, the one that crippled Winona's left ankle most thoroughly, and smashed it. Winona's kick was the one thing needful to finish that splint. She found herself free enough to hobble across the floor and call down to her mother.

"Mother! mother!" she called. "Come up here!"

"Why, I thought you'd gone," her mother answered as she hurried up the stairs. "Why—why, Winona, what on earth is the matter?"

"Louise has been giving me First Aid!" said Winona, subsiding at the top of the stairs and beginning to laugh helplessly.

"First Aid!" said her mother—"first hindrance, I should say, much more likely!"

"Well, I certainly would be glad if you'd untie me, and give me a chance to get to rehearsal," said Winona. "If Puppums hadn't come along and smashed something in his childlike glee I would be tied up on the bed yet."

"Did you call?" her mother asked.

"Call?" cried Winona, "I howled. But I realized you couldn't hear me. Well, anyway, it's all right now. But catch me being First Aided again! I don't care if I die, I don't believe I ever want anybody to put bandages on me again as long as I live."

"There you are," said her mother, unwinding the

Digitized by Google

last careful strip that Louise had carefully wound on. "And I hardly think you'll be very late."

"There's a silver lining to every cloud," said Winona cheerfully. "My sandals are all nice and dry."

She tidied herself a little, dropped the slippers into a bag, and tore downstairs. She was a little afraid she would be late.

The rehearsal was under way when she got there. The Scouts who were to be Roman citizens and slaves and other adjuncts to the affair were grouped about, waiting for their cues. There was not much dialogue. Dialogue, as they had found, doesn't count specially in pageants, any more than it does in moving-picture shows. The litter the Head Vestal was to be carried in was waiting in a dark corner, with the slaves who were to bear it sitting on the floor, amusing themselves in desperation with tit-tat-toe, by means of a piece of chalk. The girls were in their dressing-room at the other side of the stage.

Winona gave a hurried look around as she ran across, swinging the precious bag which held her gown.

"Well, Winona Merriam! The idea of your being late!" Dorothy Gray, one of the other Camp Fire girls, called to her indignantly.

Winona sat down on the floor and began to take off her shoes and tie her sandals on.

Digitized by Google

"Well, if you know what I'd been through!" she said, beginning to laugh.

Here Louise caught sight of her, and gave a shriek that carried to the street.

"Winona!—"

Winona laughed again.

"Villain, your plans are foiled!" she said cheerfully. "Behold your innocent victim, whom you left lashed to the bed, free without your intervention!"

Louise, speechless after that first shriek, could only sit down on the nearest chair and wave her hands.

"What was it? What happened?" asked the other girls, crowding around.

"Oh, nothing much," said Winona nonchalantly. "Only Louise, here, tied me all up in her best First Aid splints, and then sailed off and left me. It was exactly like a moving picture. If my faithful hound Puppums hadn't come up and freed me, I should be still tied up on the bed, and you wouldn't have had your little Winona any more. I should likely have starved to death."

Louise, overcome with remorse, and now able to speak, came over to Winona, who had finished putting on her sandals, and was dropping her Roman tunic over her head.

"Oh, Winona, did I really do that? I am so very sorry!" she said penitently. "To tell the truth, I did

Digitized by Google

forget all about you. But I'm sure I should have remembered before I went to bed tonight."

"Yes, that would have been a help," said Helen with gentle sarcasm.

"I think it's time we were on," said Louise, changing the subject with suspicious haste. And as it really was time, that was all that was said just then.

This scene of the Pageant promised to be very lovely. They planned to use green-grey curtains, with a couple of columns, for all the decoration, suggesting a background more than forcing it on anyone. When the scene opened the Roman citizens were seen going about, melon-sellers, lictors, market-women and soldiers, passing and repassing, and talking to each other about the various things they were doing. It had been a little hard for the girls to get up this part of the dialogue, but by a manful use of Macaulay's lays, all the Roman histories they could lay their hands on, and hard work, they had managed it well. The history teacher said that her boys and girls had absorbed more Roman history than she knew herself, working over it.

After the scene had gone on in this way for a little while a crying out was heard from behind the scenes, and a band of soldiers rushed on in pursuit of a criminal. There had been a good deal of competition for the part of the criminal, because it was short and spectacular, and the boy who had it had a chance for

Digitized by Google

a realistic scuffle. It had finally fallen, of all people, to Roger, because he was fair, and most of the rest of the boys were more or less dark. And when Mrs. Bryan helped cast the parts she had decided that the criminal must be a foreigner, not a Roman, and that it would emphasize it more if he was blond. Besides, Roger, was an excellent wrestler. So he dashed on in a ragged tunic, and was caught after a wild struggle, and was about to be borne off by the Roman soldiers.

But at this moment another crying was heard from the other side of the stage, "Room for the Vestal Maxima!" and solemnly, with her band of Vestal Virgins before and behind her, the litter of the Head Vestal appeared. As it crossed to the center of the stage the criminal tore himself away from his guards, and flung himself beside it.

"I claim the protection of the Vestals!" he cried.

And Adelaide, who did it very well, stepped from her litter, and held out her hand to stop the soldiers.

"On whoever the shadow of the Guardians of the Sacred Fire falls," she said, "they are freed from their bondage. By my rights as the Keeper of the Fire I free this man."

The soldiers fell on their knees around her, and the criminal got up, with nothing more to fear. The Vestals around her burst into a chant, which was carried along now by the piano, but which was going to

Digitized by Google

be backed up by an orchestra on the night of the actual Pageant. Then her slaves picked up the litter, the band of Vestals, still chanting, paced slowly off, and then the people all fell upon their knees as she vanished.

"Hallowed is the Sacred Fire!" they said. And then the curtain was dropped.

The second Vestal scene, which properly came before this one, was rehearsed then; that one where the ritual of the yearly kindling of the fire of Vesta was gone through with. This was very picturesque, but not as stirring as the scene with the criminal.

The scene which came next—not in order, but in rehearsal—was one where the town they lived in was settled. It was a long jump, but they had to take the groups of boys and girls as they could get them, and to this section had been given these two scenes, among others, because they were far apart. To a large degree the parts of the early settlers could be, and were, taken by their actual descendants. The Merriams had been among the earliest. Old Captain Hopestill Merriam, with his wife and a great many children, had settled on a tract of land where the Merriam house still stood, and they naturally gave his part to Tom. They had not, as yet, made the costumes for the Puritans.

It was stirring enough, however, and the sawed-off

Digitized by Google

muskets that the Boy Scouts used were effective, as was the grouping of the thing. The plot of this scene was a night attack by the Indians, the carrying off of some of the settlers into captivity, their return to their homes, and the building up of the fires of home by the bravery of the women. The legend, which fitted in very effectively, ran that after the destruction of the little settlement the men had lost heart, and decided that, cold, starvation and other things being very close on them, they would go back to England. Whereupon, the chronicle of the time ran, the women had risen up, and declared that so long as there was a stone of their fireplaces remaining, they would stay by their homes. Whereupon the men were shamed into declaring the same thing, and, going back, rebuilt their huts, and worked on until the settlement was a success, and their children grew up around them, and they saw the beginnings of a prosperous town.

"This is going to be one of the most successful scenes of the Pageant," declared Mrs. Bryan, sitting down on a chair to take her breath—for she, in the character of an especially violent old Indian woman, had been scalping, burning and destroying with the best of them. "Everybody is going to sit up and pick out their own ancestors, and—children, if we don't have our accessories correctly arranged to the last detail, woe betide us! Somebody is sure to rise up and tell

Digitized by Google

us that their great-grandmother remembered that and passed it down to her children, and that it wasn't like that at all."

"What do you mean?" asked Louise, who was rather literal.

"Any one at all—any scrap of a detail we have overlooked."

Helen began to laugh.

"Nannie, do you remember that pageant we saw, where all the Spaniards had red mustaches?"

"That was certainly one of the most unaccountable things I ever saw in a pageant in my life," Mrs. Bryan answered her. "But they all got thoroughly written up in the papers about it afterwards. Now, my dears, we have some more rehearsing to do, if you all have your breaths."

This last was an interior scene. It represented the "Fire of Patriotism," and it was to be done in 1860 costume. It represented a mother bidding her sons goodbye, as they went to fight in the Civil war. The dialogue was short, but it was good, and when the last son had gone out the door, leaving the mother kneeling by the fire, grieved, but proud that she had done what she knew was best, the ones who were not in the picture applauded involuntarily.

"Now, when we have that Cave scene worked out properly, and the Jeanne-D'Arc scene, and the medieval

Digitized by Google

ones, the back of our part of the work will be broken," said Mrs. Bryan.

Nobody knew yet who was to be chosen for Jeanne D'Arc. The scene she was in was to be called "The Fire of Courage," and it promised to be one of the most beautiful of the scenes. The market-place at Rouen was to be suggested, with the populace in their medieval garments, and the stake. The Camp Fire Girls had grown so expert now in the experimental management of imitation fires that a little thing like giving a picture of burning someone alive presented few terrors to them. The priests and bishops, the men-at-arms and the market-women, even the executioner, had been chosen, in the hope of eliminating as many competitors as possible—but not Jeanne herself. Because every one of the girls, in her secret heart of hearts, wanted that character. Winona, with her usual sweetness, had said that she didn't, giving as a reason that she had the principal part in the Colonial scene, as Mistress Merriam, and also, as one of the only two Torchbearers, was the prominent figure in the final tableau, where the Camp Fire itself was featured.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER ELEVEN

NEVERTHELESS, Winona was the only one who didn't really want the Jeanne D'Arc tableau very badly. Adelaide, in spite of her Head Virginship, secretly wished that it might come to her, and practised before her mirror, at night, with her red-brown hair shaken out about her thin face. Marie felt that she looked like a picture that she had found of Jeanne kneeling and offering her sword. As a matter of fact, she did; and there was no one to point out to her that no two of the dozens of pictures of the Maid look alike. Helen wanted it—well, just because she wanted it. She had not been given any one prominent part, and thought this would be very much what her heart desired. Edith, knowing perfectly well that her yellow curls and blue eyes and pink cheeks were the prettiest in the crowd, also thought that they entitled her to the part. As for Louise, she knew perfectly well that her cheerful plumpness and heavy red hair were not what Jeanne D'Arc had been famous for; but who ever was reasonable about such things? She wanted that part as she never remembered wanting anything in her life.

Mrs. Bryan knew perfectly well how they all felt, and, being a lady who believed in seeing things through, made up her mind to setttle this out of hand at the next meeting.

Digitized by Google

It was held at her own house, and after the routine business had been settled, she got briskly to work.

"Now, girls," she began, "I'm going to have to talk to you about being Jeanne D'Arc. There's no use of any of you saying you don't want that part, because I know you all do. I don't say that I wouldn't like to have it myself. And you know that it happens to fall into our part of the Pageant, so that there's no question but that one of you here will have it. And there's no question but that all of you who don't get it will be as loyal to the Camp Fire Spirit as you've always been. But there's only one part, and several girls for it. What are we going to do?"

"There are such lots of other parts," protested Dorothy Gray, quite sincerely. "I'm quite satisfied with being the Lady Abbess who sails haughtily across the stage, and is moved by Jeanne's steadfastness. I love that sort of clothes."

Mrs. Bryan sighed in a little relief.

"Then that settles you," she observed. "And, Winnie, I know what you think—that you have enough parts without Jeanne."

"I certainly have," smiled Winona. "I feel like a lightning-change artist as it is. Anyway, the Fire of Learning, that Renaissance Italian picture where I'm somebody with a long Italian name, knowing all sorts of languages and wearing a green velvet dress, would

Digitized by Google

make it impossible. It comes so close on that, you know, and I say so much, that I couldn't get Jeanne in with the best will in the world, even if they'd offered her to me." Mrs. Bryan sighed in relief again, and felt that her task was simplifying as it went. You could always depend on Winona to do the pleasant and comforting thing, and do it with a grace. She turned to her own stepdaughter next.

"Helen, my child, I'm afraid it wouldn't seem quite pretty of me to hand the part to my own daughter once removed. Besides, I think you, like Winona, have enough to do without it."

Helen was to be one of the Cave women, in a fur rug, she was a Vestal Virgin and one of the morris dancers in an English scene of the time of Henry the Eighth. Besides that again, she was Populace in a good many places.

"Being the step-daughter of a conscientious person isn't a thing that leads to high places," Helen remarked, shrugging her shoulders. But there wasn't any way of getting behind that. She said no more.

The rest of the girls tried to look unconscious as the choice narrowed. But after that it narrowed no more.

"That's as far as I can go," Mrs. Bryan finished most unexpectedly. "I only know one way to settle the thing as for the rest of you. The part takes very

Digitized by Google

little rehearsing, and the robes will fit anyone. We'll wait till the Pageant-Mistress comes down, and let her choose the one of you she think most suitable."

The Pageant-Mistress was a late improvement She was also a heaven-sent windfall. They had not thought of having anyone who was professional help them, but a week before one of the girls of Wah-wah-tay-see had unexpectedly offered the news that she had a cousin who made a business of pageants, and who was coming to visit the family soon. She thought that the cousin wouldn't mind looking their Pageant over and offering a few suggestions, and wrote to her to ask if she would. The cousin wrote back that she would be delighted to make a present of as much professional advice as the girls wanted, on condition that she didn't have to do any executive work.

As suggestions were precisely what the Camps wanted, and as directions were what they didn't want, everyone was pleased. And certainly the choosing of a Jeanne D'Arc fell under the heading of advice. So everyone was delighted, and went home that night—that is, the girls who hadn't been eliminated—and took down their hair from its knots and its plaits, and put on their most flowing nightgowns and stole candles from the kitchens, and tried to see just how they would look as Jeanne D'Arc, anyway.

All but Louise. She was still in the running.

Digitized by Google

Not that she had any hopes to speak of. She knew perfectly well, as she considered herself in the glass, that as a Jeanne D'Arc she would not be a success.

"It'll probably be Edith," she said to herself. "Oh, dear—I wonder how it would feel to be as pretty as that all the time? Or even a little of the time—"

Louise took one last look at herself in the glass. She was generally a very happy-hearted sort of person, and the way she looked didn't matter much to her. But sometimes one does want to be pretty.

She shook down her masses of red hair, and looked at herself. She didn't like its being red, but there was heaps and heaps of it, wavy, and with pretty lights and shades in it. She had big blue eyes, and a skin that would have been the pink and white that goes with some shades of red hair, if it hadn't been sunburnt still by going out in all weathers.

"My face isn't so bad," she thought, and then grinned.

"I'd better go to bed and stop fussing," she said to herself.

"For beauty I am not a star,
There are others more handsome by far,
But my face—I don't mind it
For I am behind it—
It's the people in front that I jar!"

Digitized by Google

And having recited the President's favorite poem, and being much soothed thereby, she braided her hair up again, finished undressing, and hopped into her comfortable bed.

So the rehearsals went on.

"The way to do is to work just as hard as I possibly can at everything," Louise reasoned, "so I won't feel badly about not being Jeanne. If I have lots else to do I know I won't care."

So she flung herself with a will into the hardest part of the work, the morris-dancing. There was a strong temptation to skip as many rehearsals as possible, but Louise, who was being quite severe with herself, went to every one. And then what seemed to her a rather awful reward of virtue occurred.

"Louise, you are getting to dance so well that I'm going to set you at training some of the younger children," the teacher who was looking after the dancers told her one day, when she had been morris-dancing till she wanted to drop. "Edith Hillis has enough with the fairy-dances and her costume work. Indeed, I think she is going to have to drop everything but the costuming soon; she says that takes most of her time, and no one else does it so well. I've watched you, and you know more about the other dances than any of the rest. You are perfectly capable of seeing the little girls through their May Pole dances in the English

Digitized by Google

scene, and that dance of the Indian children too. And that dance around the St. John's day fire, in the Fire of Health scene—"

"Oh, Miss Dorrance!" protested Louise. "Why, I didn't think I could dance well at all!"

Miss Dorrance laughed.

"You dance very well, and you have the ideas back of the dancing," she told her. "And I have another idea for you, too. You remember that Greek dance, a sort of Isadora Duncan effect, the one we call "Spring?"

"Why, yes," said Louise, wondering.

It was a big ensemble dance, where all the big and little girls, in colored Greek robes, skipped about in a very simple way that felt more like playing tag than anything else, but looked wonderful to the spectators. They did it to one of Grieg's suites.

"Well, I've been watching you in that too, and I want to try an experiment. Are you tired?"

Louise had been feeling rather played out a few minutes before, but she felt quite fresh now. She got up from the piece of scenery she had been sitting on, on the stage of the schoolhouse assembly-room, and listened harder.

"I'm not tired a bit," said she.

"No," said Miss Dorrance. "You have endurance enough for anything. Indeed, you are the sort of

Digitized by Google

person who ought to go in for pageantry as a profession."

Louise laughed.

"If all it took was toughness I'd be a dream at it," said she cheerfully. "What is it you want me to do?"

"I'm planning a symbolic dance for a finale to the Greek one," Miss Dorrance told her. The dance of the Elements. First Earth, then Water, Air, and Fire—Fire for the climax, of course. I have my eye on Winnie Merriam for Earth, and little Edith for Air—I don't know yet who the Water will be, but someone very light and graceful—but you are the ideal Fire."

"Fire!" said Louise blankly. Then she laughed. "Oh, you mean my hair. But—but, Miss Dorrance, I'm too plump. Just look at me!"

Miss Dorrance eyed Louise from head to foot as she stood in the middle of the stage.

"My dear girl, don't you realize that you have lost twenty pounds since you began doing all this dancing?" she demanded.

Louise sat down on the floor in a little heap. It was the dearest wish of her heart to get thinner, but she had not realized in the least that she was doing it. It came to her now that she had been pinning her skirtbands over because they felt loose; but she had thought that was because they were stretching. Getting thin had been the thing farthest from her thoughts.

Digitized by Google

"Oh!" she said ecstatically. "How perfectly lovely!"

"And now let's try out my idea," went on Miss Dorrance as calmly as if she hadn't made Louise happier than she'd been for months.

She went to the back of the stage and turned around the full-length mirror which she kept there for the dancers to use. Then she went off to the dressing-rooms and came back with a couple of lengths of shaded silk.

"I had to have this specially dyed," she said, "because you can't get just the colors you want without. Isn't it pretty?"

It was certainly lovely. It had all the fire-shades in it, from the lovely fire-red of sunset, to the little blues and greens that come on the edges of flame. You could tell by looking at it that with a light playing on it it would be the loveliest thing imaginable.

"Now get into this," Miss Dorrance said, "and take down all that wonderful hair of yours, and we'll get to work."

Louise did meekly as she was told, slipping off the white Greek robe she had been dancing in before the others went, and letting Miss Dorrance, instead, drape her in the flame-tinted silk. She unbraided her hair, and shook it out, a long, heavy red mass with gold lights in it. Miss Dorrance fastened it in place with

Digitized by Google

a wreath of tinsel, and then set her before the mirror.

"What do you think of her?" she demanded.

"Why," said Louise in honest amazement, "why, Miss Dorrance, I'm almost pretty!"

Miss Dorrance smiled. "Rather better than pretty," she said. "You are very handsome in that, my dear. Now try to attend to what I tell you."

Louise felt as if she had never been tired in her life, as, with her long hair flying loose and her flame-colored draperies whirling about her, she followed Miss Dorrance in the turns and whirlings of the fire-dance.

After an hour's practice Miss Dorrance stopped.

"There, I suppose I've nearly worn you out," she said. "But you are getting the idea wonderfully. With the calcium lights and the background of the others this ought to be stunning. You are just the one for it, Louise."

Louise went home so excited she could scarcely think. What was Jeanne D'Arc to this—and to being told that she was getting thinner? She stopped in a drug store on her way home, for it was not yet time for dinner, and got weighed.

Miss Dorrance was right, almost to the dot. Louise had lost nineteen and a half pounds, unless the scales were telling a very dreadful story.

She solemnly visited every other pair of scales that

Digitized by Google

she knew, in the neighborhood. And they all told more or less the same story.

"Winona!" she cried, pouncing on that damsel as they met next day at the schoolhouse door, "I'm thinner—I'm lots thinner, and I'm going to do a Fire Dance!"

Winona took it quite calmly.

"Of course you're thinner," she said. "Do you mean to say you didn't know it?"

"Not a word," said Louise. "I thought I'd be plump to the end of my days, and end my life as a cheerful, resigned old maid weighing three hundred. I always planned that I'd tell my nieces then that I was very slim, very slim, my dears, at the age of sixteen! They'd never know the difference."

"It will probably be true if you keep on the way you're going now," added Winona. "And what about the fire dance? Are you going to do solo dancing?"

So Louise told her all about all Miss Dorrance had said.

Winona clapped her hands.

"Oh, I'm so glad! Isn't that perfectly splendid? And, Louise—think of the honor beads!"

Louise had never thought of them at all, but she began to now.

"You'll get one, as sure as anything, for the dancing, and, of course, for teaching the little girls their

Digitized by Google

dances—why, Louise, that's a count toward a Torch-bearer's degree. You know you have to lead a group for three months. Well, by the time the Pageant is ready you will have done that."

"There's one nice thing," Louise answered thankfully, "I don't mind now about not being Jeanne d'Arc."

"I don't see why on earth you should," said Winona. "I think the things you are doing are lots better."

"I don't know," Louise answered thoughtfully, "there's something about that part that makes you want it badly. I don't say I wouldn't like to have it, still."

But Winona laughed, and they went in.

So the next week came, after being awaited with much excitement, the Pageant-Mistress. She proved to be a very nice girl as well, not at all the terror they had half expected. She helped them with the lighting, suggested some improvements on the Indian yells, arranged the cave with her own hands, highly approved of the dances, and altogether was a great success.

When the rehearsal had been gone through with, or as much of it as they could put together for Miss Altson, came the crucial moment. The rest of the people went home, and only the girls who were to be chosen for Jeanne d'Arc stayed. Miss Altson had the

Digitized by Google

calcium man stay too, and focus a red light on the place that was to answer for Jeanne's stake.

"Now will the girls who are to be tried out for this part please stand in that light, one after another, till all of you have been?" she asked in a matter-of-fact way.

"I hate to do it all alone," whispered Edith. "There are only three of us, now the others have been given so much else to do."

"Then why don't we all try it?" suggested Marie, who always made the suggestions that they finally took. "Winona and Helen and Louise and all."

"There isn't much use of that," protested Helen, "because as things are now I for one can't possibly get it in."

"Never mind," said Winona, "we might as well, if it will make Edith less self-conscious."

"Hurry, girls," called Miss Altson from the platform, where she was standing a little to one side of the spotlight. "Any one of you come up here. Mrs. Bryan will pose you, and I'll go back where I can see better."

"All right," called back Helen, who was less excited than the others, and slipped up and into the circle of light, while Miss Altson went down to the place she had indicated.

"Stand straight," called Miss Altson up to her,

Digitized by Google

"and cross your hands in front of you, and look up. That's it—yes, that's enough. Now, the second girl."

"How was she?" Mrs. Bryan asked in an undertone, coming down from her place, as she saw that the girls understood Miss Altson's directions without being posed.

"Very good, but not enough expression," Miss Altson answered in an undertone, also. "And her features are too small to make up very well. That strong light doesn't suit all faces equally."

"Then that settles little Edith," said Mrs. Bryan, as Edith stepped into the spot of red light and posed.

"I'm afraid she'd never do under any circumstances," Miss Altson answered decidedly. "She is as near a perfect wax doll as ever I saw. It's a charming type, but it isn't Jeanne."

Mrs. Bryan nodded. She quite agreed with Miss Altson so far, and waited to hear what she would say about Winnie.

"Do you like her in the part?" she asked.

"She'd do," Miss Altson admitted, "but there isn't enough intensity. It's expression and lines I want more than anything else. This one is the best so far."

"This one" was Marie Hunter, tall and straight and serious as ever, even in her crossing of the stage.

"Are there any more?" Miss Altson asked. She did not seem quite satisfied.

Digitized by Google

"Dorothy and Adelaide and Louise," Helen answered.

"Then try them," said Miss Altson, who, as a professional, was given to hurrying things through.

"Here, Louise, get into the spotlight," called Helen unceremoniously.

"It's scarcely worth while," said Louise. "You know I've stopped competing for Jeanne."

"Oh, well, you're here," Helen answered carelessly. "I'm not in it either, but I tried it out for fun."

So Louise, whose hair was still hanging loose from a late rehearsal of her fire dance, stepped into position and lifted her face as the others had done. She couldn't help wishing fervently for the moment that she was still in the competition. She was one of the people who want a thing badly when they want it at all, and she found to her surprise that, once posing for the tableau, she desired to be Jeanne as ardently as ever. She stood there, forgetting where she was for the moment, she was wishing so hard to have it happen.

She was awakened from her thoughts by hearing Miss Altson clap her hands.

"Splendid!" she cried. "There, that's the one, Mrs. Bryan—no question about it. Good hair, good pose, splendid expression. She looks the type, too—sturdy, and yet with capabilities of the other things. And her expression—that's the best thing I've seen.

Digitized by Google

No, there's no use trying the others; they aren't the right build, and besides, this girl is undoubtedly the one for the part. Can you get that expression again, my dear, do you think, the night, and how does your voice carry?"

"I don't know about the expression," Louise heard herself saying with a calmness that astonished herself, "But my voice carries all right." Then she came to a realizing sense of things, and stepped out of the spotlight.

"Oh, but—but I wasn't going to want it any more," she protested conscientiously. "I have a dance to do, and some minor parts also, and I'd dropped wanting it."

"Well, it's an important part," Miss Altson answered decidedly. "I'm only here to advise, but I do advise most strongly, Mrs. Bryan, that this girl takes the Jeanne part even if she had to drop the others. She's the only one for it. You might make the others do, but she fits it without any doing at all."

Louise came down off the platform, feeling as if the world had turned into quite another place from the one it had been before. The one who fitted the part best—the only one who really suited it well!

"I feel like the Old Woman in the nursery rhyme," she said to the others as she came down, "'if I be I, as I really think I be, I have a little dog at home, and he'll know me.'"

Digitized by Google

The others looked at her with a new respect.

"Good gracious, to think of your looking like Jeanne d'Arc!" Edith exclaimed with frank surprise. "And do you know, Louise, you really did, up there in the light. I never saw anybody so much thinner as you've become."

"Do you really think I ought to take it, Winona? Would it really be fair?" Louise whispered to her friend.

"I think it would be perfectly fair," Winona answered decidedly. "You can get it in with the other parts, and that's all that's necessary. I think it's lovely that you have it."

Louise sat down in one of the wooden seats with a deep sigh of relief, and began braiding up her hair.

"I'll never insult my red hair again," she said. "As far as I can see, it's more useful in pageants than any other kind, even if it isn't in real life."

"It's lovely in real life," said Winona warmly. "Wait till you're grown up, and you'll see. Everybody says so."

"Everybody always said things about beets and white horses," said Louise placidly. "It certainly is funny to have something you've always been resigned to turn out to be a blessing."

Winona looked thoughtful.

Digitized by Google

"I wonder if what I have at home is going to turn out that way?" she pondered aloud. "Oh, Louise, I haven't had a chance to tell you, but the most awful thing has happened!"

"Why, Winona Merriam, what?" demanded Louise.

"A baby!" said Winona despairingly.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER TWELVE

"A WHAT?" demanded Louise, catching her breath.

"A baby," repeated Winona.

"Whose?" Louise asked.

"Goodness only knows," said Winona, "they just dropped it on us!"

"Good gracious!" said Louise.

"Well," went on Winona, "it's my private impression that you're responsible for it, Lou, with your wild ideas of adopting Sandy."

Louise began to laugh. She couldn't help it—it did sound so funny!

"Do tell me about it!" she exclaimed.

"I suppose you remember, last summer at Camp Karonya, being suddenly struck with a wonderful idea for having the Camp Fire adopt something or other?" she asked.

"I was," acknowledged Louise mournfully, "and I wanted to so hard that I tried to adopt Sandy Mitchell, and she proved to have a perfectly good home and family."

"Exactly," said Winona. "Well, do you remember that after she proved to have the good home and family you went around saying sadly that you still wanted something for the Camp Fire to adopt?"

"I don't think I said it sadly," said Louise in de-

Digitized by Google

fense, "but I did think it would be a nice thing if we could collect some child who really needed looking after, and do it. But we don't need one now. We've adopted a pageant."

"It's very hard to undo one's dark past," said Winona, grinning. "Here's a letter I got to-night. I have no idea in the world why it happened to me. It ought to have been to Helen as Secretary, if Mrs. Bryan didn't have it. The person who really deserved it, of course, was you."

"Oh, you got it because of the cats," said Louise cheerfully.

This referred to another of the things that had happened at camp that summer. Winona had rescued two kittens, and, not having any home to bestow on them herself, had advertised them in the paper of the village near them. So for the rest of the summer there had been a steady stream of cats flowing to and from Camp Karonya—a cat clearing house. It was the Camp Fire's best joke on Winona.

"I don't see what the cats had to do with it," said Winona defensively.

"That's simple. The village people got it into their heads that you were the official receiver of anything they wanted to dump. But read me the letter."

Winona fished in the pocket of her skirt, and pulled out an envelope.

Digitized by Google

"Here's what it says," she began, as her head and Louise's bent over the letter.

"'Dear Miss Merriam;

"'Understanding that last summer you and the rest of your camp was looking for a child to adopt, I am sending you one.'"

"*What?*" interrupted Louise.

Winona nodded.

"Yes. And they did it. Let me go on. "'This child is of good parents. One of them, its father, has run away, and the other of them, me, its mother, cannot support it.'"

"H'm!" Louise interrupted. "That may be her idea of good parents, but it isn't mine. That child made a great mistake when she picked them out, whatever they may think about it."

"Oh, do hush!" said Winona, going on. "'I am bringing her down, with her dresses. I haven't been able to finish the pink silk one that she wears when there is company, but there is not much to do on it. Her name is Dolores Lulu Nichols. Her birthday is in November.'"

"Dolores Lulu!" gasped Louise.

"Dolores Lulu," assented Winona.

There seemed nothing to say after that for awhile. At length Louise got her breath.

Digitized by Google

"And is she there?" she asked.

"She is," said Winona gloomily. "She came this afternoon. There wasn't anybody at home but Clay. Mother was out at the Ladies' Aid, and I was over at Helen's, sewing on a costume. Of course the rest weren't home; they never are that time of day. Clay says this woman came, and brought the baby, and left her there with a box of candy to keep her quiet, and her clothes."

Clay was the small black boy who helped with the Merriam housework. He was clever about some things, but there were certain other things that he was far from clever about. Though indeed it would have taken a great deal of sense to know what to do in this case.

"And then what?"

"And then nothing," said Winona. "She left this letter for me, and went away without giving any address. She signed her name, and I suppose she lived in the village, or she wouldn't have known about your awful desire to have the Camp adopt anything."

"Oh, don't rub it in," said Louise, wriggling. "And—and where's the baby?"

"Why, the baby's where she left it, of course," said Winona. "That is, it isn't sitting in the middle of our living-room floor, a little to the left of its own pink silk company frock that I'm expected to finish. That's where I found it when I came home. Mother put it

Digitized by Google

to bed, naturally. It had a night-gown. And she gave it some supper. Oh, we've been nice to it, and it doesn't seem to mind much what happens, but——"

"But I do!" exclaimed Louise. "What on earth shall we do with her? We can't afford to support her. We're putting all the Camp money into the Pageant expenses, for one thing. And then the care of her's a lot, too. I found that out when we went over and tried to run Vicky Mitchell's house for a week. Sandy was one person's work, and she's five at least."

"I think I shall steal into your house and leave her on the floor there with a note," said Winona cheerfully, "the way her mother did to us. I think you deserve it, Lou."

"I suppose I do," said Louise, so meekly that Winona hadn't the heart to tease her any longer.

"Well, come over and see her to-morrow. We'll have a Camp Fire meeting over her," said Winona. "There, they're calling me for the Fire of Learning scene. See you later, Lou."

Louise, left alone with the note, read it despairingly several times. The baby's mother evidently was taking no chances, for she was not leaving a single clue to who she was, or where she had gone. She signed her letter simply, "Mrs. Nichols." And there was the baby, asleep at Winona's at that very minute.

"Good gracious!" said Louise.

Digitized by Google

They held a Camp Fire meeting over the baby next day. It was in Winona's living-room. The baby sat on a cushion in the middle of the floor, and the girls sat around the room and looked at her. Mrs. Bryan and Mrs. Merriam, a little behind the rest, discussed it in a low tone, while the girls exclaimed.

She was not a very pretty baby, though she was an attractive one. She had light red hair that had been cut off for greater convenience, evidently, in an attempt at bobbing. She had blue-gray eyes set on a fascinating slant, and a pale little face with a pair of adorable dimples.

"She's going to grow up to be very attractive," said Mrs. Bryan, "and if she's dressed properly she'll be pretty."

"She looks like a little elf," said Marie Hunter, "like something from fairyland."

"All but her clothes," said Helen with a groan. "Oh, Dolores Lulu, why did your mother dress a red-haired baby in pink gingham?"

"Thank you," said Dolores Lulu. It was almost her only effort at conversation, but she brought it in whenever she could.

She laughed up at them in a way that made her slanting eyes crinkle and her dimples come out, and said it over again, when she saw it was successful.

"*Thank* you!"

Digitized by Google

"Oh, you darling! You're very welcome!" said Helen, melting. "Mrs. Merriam, how old do you think she is?"

"I should think the birthday in November must be her second," Mrs. Merriam guessed. "What do you think, Nannie?"

"Oh, yes," Mrs. Bryan said. "She's a cunning baby. And she seems like a sweet-tempered child. But, oh, what on earth shall we do with her?"

"The thing to do, I suppose, is to send her to the county-house," said Mrs. Merriam, "but you know perfectly well that none of us will do it, and I suppose the confiding Mrs. Nichols knew it, too. Winona, *what* are you doing?"

Winona looked up a little shamefacedly.

"I'm only seeing how this pink silk frock goes, that Dolores Lulu is to wear for company. There isn't much to do to it."

She went on sewing it, now that she was discovered, with such diligence that it promised to be done before the meeting was over.

"Yes there is, too," said Helen. "You give it to me, Winnie, and I'll boil it out white. It's a crime to dress that baby the way its mother has."

"What shall we call it?" asked Edith joyously. "I don't think Dolores Lulu is pretty. Dolly would be lots better."

Digitized by Google

"Yes, Dolly is better," agreed Louise. "I wonder if it will take long to teach it to her. Here, Dolly!"

Dolores Lulu, responding, as dogs do, more to the tone than to the words, looked up brightly, "Please," she said.

"Good gracious, did you ever see such a polite child in your life!" cried Winona, dropping to the floor and hugging the baby. "Why, you darling! You have more manners than anybody I ever saw!"

Dolores Lulu promptly hugged her back. "Thank you," she said sweetly.

"She doesn't know many words, but she certainly knows how to work them," said Louise, laughing. "Will you kiss me, too, Dolly?"

Dolores Lulu, it appeared, liked kissing people. She put her arms up to Louise as promptly as she had to the rest, and used two more words. "Sweet kiss?" she said cooingly.

"Good gracious, what an affectionate-minded baby," exclaimed Winona. "I wasn't like that."

"No, you weren't," said her mother. "You liked people, or you didn't, and I trained you not to kiss people, anyway. Goodness knows what this poor little Dolores will catch if she keeps on being allowed to kiss everyone."

"Oh, but it doesn't hurt her to kiss us," said most of the girls in chorus.

Digitized by Google

And those who hadn't kissed her before began to do it.

"Thank you—dinner," remarked Dolores. She sat back on her cushion, the levee being over, and looked around for something to eat.

"Can we feed her?" asked Edith, as she would have asked after a pet animal.

"She's evidently used to having something just about this time," said Mrs. Merriam. "What her mother feeds her I'm afraid to think. Florence, dear, will you run out into the kitchen and get a mug of milk for the baby?"

Florence, who was attending the Camp Fire meeting because she was one of the Merriam family, and nobody had thought to exclude her, sprang up and dashed out for the baby's milk. On being given it, Dolores Lulu drank it all without stopping once, flung the mug into a corner with one sweep of her arm, and said "Thank you," amiably again.

"Such manners!" sighed Winona, mopping off the baby's mouth.

"Do you mean saying thank you, or throwing the mug away?" Louise wanted to know. Louise felt a certain ownership in the baby, that was fast becoming an honor rather than a reproach.

But Mrs. Bryan, after she had let the baby-worship go on for a while longer, interposed a question.

Digitized by Google

"Well, Daughters of the Camp Fire, just what do you intend doing with the baby?"

Everybody sat back. They had forgotten all about that.

"You have to do something, you know," she reminded them, as they looked at her blankly. "A child of this age is one person's work. Mrs. Merriam has been very kind to keep her overnight, but it can't go on indefinitely. She's been thrown on our hands. I know she's a dear little thing, but after all she isn't a dog or cat, she's a human being, and a responsibility. Has anyone any suggestions?"

They sat silently and thought, while Dolores, a little surprised at the sudden cessation of attentions, crawled over to the nearest girl, who happened to be Edith, and began to investigate her bracelets.

"Oh, can't we keep her?" pleaded Winona, very much as if Dolores Lulu had been a kitten.

"She's a human being, and a responsibility," repeated Mrs. Bryan. Mrs. Merriam said nothing.

"Well, so were we all of us," said Louise rebelliously. "I don't see why that makes any difference."

"For one thing," Marie Hunter reminded them, "even if we took her to keep, we haven't any legal hold over her."

"Legal hold!" said Winona in a frightened voice, "what does that mean? Would anybody have?"

Digitized by Google

Marie laughed.

"What I mean is," she said, "that her father or mother might come back any time and walk off with her."

"Well, then, that would stop her being a responsibility," Louise answered defiantly.

"Just as we'd all got very, very fond of her?" asked Marie.

"Well, I think you're borrowing trouble," Louise insisted.

Dolores Lulu struggled to her none too steady feet, revealing buttoned shoes which had once been white, and big enough for comfort, but were neither now. She toddled over to Louise, and surveyed her calmly.

"Go home?" she said. This was quite a new phrase, and she seemed to know what it meant.

Louise looked at the child, and was struck by a very good idea.

"I think you've struck it, Dolores Lulu," she said. Then she turned to the others. "Why don't we take the car and——"

"What car?" interrupted Edith.

"Why father's large, haughty auto, of course. And go over to the village and see what we can find out about Mrs. Nichols, and Mr. Nichols and Dolores Lulu."

This inspiring idea was hailed with excitement.

Digitized by Google

"GO HOME," SHE SAID

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

"I think it would be a perfectly splendid thing to do," said Winona, and the others agreed with her. "When can we go?"

Louise looked thoughtful.

"Let's see—to-morrow afternoon I have to drill those little imps in their Indian dance, and of course to-morrow evening is a rehearsal. I wonder what we'll all do with our evenings, by the way, when the pageant is over. Rehearse automatically, I think. The next afternoon will have to be the one. How many can come? The machine will hold all of us if we don't mind crowding."

After a good deal of arranging and planning they all thought they could manage to come.

"Shall we take Dolores Lulu?" Louise wanted to know.

"I think you'd better not," said Mrs. Merriam. "She's a dear little thing, and I don't mind a bit keeping her for a while. It seems rather pleasant, having a baby in the house again."

"Looks to me as if Dolores Lulu was certain of one friend," laughed Louise. "You certainly do take things in, Mrs. Merriam. First it was Roger, now it's Dolores. I wonder what the next waif will be."

"There is one thing sure," said Winona pensively, "it can't be a dog or a cat. We have all of both that we can have. Puppums won't allow another dog on

Digitized by Google

the premises, for fear we'll love it more than we do him."

Puppums, hearing his name, came out of the corner where he was curled, and looked at Winona reproachfully.

"Why, somebody's been hurting my old dog's feelings," cried Winona, making a dash for him and picking him up bodily in her arms. He made himself reproachfully stiff, and allowed his tail to droop.

"For goodness' sake, doggie, what's the matter?" she inquired. They all talked to the dog as if he was quite as human as they were, and he usually acted as if he knew what was going on.

He rolled one eye up at her, still in a very reproachful way, and continued to express hurt feelings as clearly as a dog, who has no way of saying it to you in words, can.

"Oh, he's jealous!" explained Florence. "He's jealous as he can be of Dolores Lulu. He thinks there oughtn't to be anybody else in the house that gets petted —you know that."

"Oh, that's the pug in him!" said Winona impatiently. This was another of the family's little ways. They always explained Puppums's behavior carefully by allusions to the various strains of ancestry that he possessed. As he might have been almost any kind of a dog, and unmistakably was seven or eight traceable

Digitized by Google

kinds, excuses for him never failed—although the family did consider it rather a stretch when Florence explained his fondness for fish by suggesting that it was the water-spaniel in him. "Puppums, you know perfectly well you haven't any business to be jealous of a poor little left-around baby with no home to go to and a father and mother that have gone off and left it."

She put him down, and tried to take him over and get him to make friends with Dolores. But he simply sniffed at her once in a scornful manner, and then put his tail between his legs and went off back to his own private corner.

"Bad dog!" said Winona severely. But Puppums was not impressionable—probably he had not enough collie in his ancestry—and he simply opened one eye, as if to say "I hear you, but you are quite wrong——" and shut it again.

"It's settled, then," said Marie in a business-like way, "that we take Louise's father's car and go over to the village near the camp, and find all about Mrs. Nichols—if there is a Mrs. Nichols. Suppose she used a name that didn't belong to her?"

At this fearful suggestion all the girls looked at each other, and didn't know what to say.

"Oh, she wouldn't," said Louise confidently. "I'm perfectly sure it was her own name. Even if it wasn't, all we have to do is describe Dolores Lulu. It isn't

Digitized by Google

such a big village, and they'd know a family with a red-haired baby that had such polite manners as this one."

"We'll just have to risk it," Winona decided, and then she brought in some sandwiches and cocoa, and passed them around.

Puppums deigned to come out of his corner when he saw that things to eat were going on. As Dolores Lulu also was interested, and the two were both very active in begging for scraps, they necessarily collided once or twice. So Winona was relieved to see that Puppums was getting used to Dolores, and that there probably wouldn't be a strained feeling long.

"Day after to-morrow at two o'clock," said Louise in conclusion. "I'll ask father to have the car outside the schoolhouse just at two, and we can all dash out and pile in. So bring lunches, everybody, and we won't have to go home."

"That will make it more picknicky than ever," said Winona cheerfully. "I love taking lunches to places."

"We'll have thermos bottles, and eat in the car as we go over," Louise continued. "If each brings her own lunch it will be better than if we all pool. Less planning, I mean."

"All right," said everybody, and they trooped out.

So at two precisely, two days after that, Mr. Lane's chauffeur drew the big car up before the door of the school, and the girls piled in, with lunches and auto-

Digitized by Google

veils and warm coats. It was a wonderful autumn day, with the exciting tang in the air that comes in late October, and everybody was so excited and happy that it wouldn't have mattered a bit where they were going or what they were going to do. They chugged down the road, Marie on the front seat, showing the chauffeur where to go, for he was a new one, and the Lanes had engaged him since the girls had come back from their camping trip.

"I wonder if the way we hiked is the best way for a car to go," said Louise doubtfully. "There were grassy places, it seems to me, where a car wouldn't go, where we trotted along quite happily."

"It's very likely, Miss," said the chauffeur in a depressed voice. He was English, and he didn't at all understand the happy-go-lucky spirit of the Camp Fire girls in general, and Louise Lane in particular. Like Old Mary, he only cheered up when Roger approached him, and talked to him in a way that the girls thought was curiously curt and casual.

"Sort of like the way you'd talk to a nice dog," complained Louise. "But he certainly blossoms under it."

He was not blossoming to-day. Mr. Lane had weighed him down with instructions and orders and warnings, and between these and the cheerfulness of the girls it was no wonder he was depressed.

Digitized by Google

"Now, Williams, there's no reasons for feeling so sad," said Louise cheerfully. "All you have to do is to go where Miss Hunter shows you, and if we get stuck in anything I'll tell father it was all my fault."

But even this didn't make Williams a bit happy. And when, after three miles of careful directions, they did land in a narrow wood-path which necessitated backing the car for at least a quarter of a mile, he became so gloomy that, as Louise complained afterwards, there was no living with him.

They reached the village with little more trouble than this, however, and stopped, by the decision of the whole crowd, at the village post-office. They had discovered the previous summer that if you wanted news there was the place to get it. They alighted one by one, very slowly, to give the villagers a good view of their civilized clothes. This was Louise's idea.

"If we all bound in the way we used to last summer, in our middies and bloomers or middies and skirts, or sometimes just our bathing-suits, they won't respect us," she assured her friends. "But if we alight gracefully from a large car all tied up in veils and motor-coats, they'll answer our questions politely."

The event was a little more than she had bargained for. As a matter of fact, their friends at the post-office did not know them at all, dressed in citizens' clothing (as Louise put it) and they wasted a great

Digitized by Google

deal of valuable time explaining that they were they, like the old woman in the nursery rhyme. Then a great deal more time was taken up explaining how Louise had become so slim, and why Adelaide wasn't freckled, and how dignified Marie looked in her long skirt, and it took considerable effort on the part of the girls, altogether, to bring the conversation round to Mrs. Nichols.

"Mrs. Nichols!" exclaimed the old postmaster finally, when they had gotten him keyed up to the point of talking about something besides themselves. "Why, of course there's a Mrs. Nichols here. In fact, there isn't much else. There's a Mrs. Nichols down by the point, and a Nichols family round at the Nichols farm, and then there's Mrs. Jim Nichols and Mrs. Alonzo Nichols, and——"

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Winona and Louise together, in despair. "What shall we do?"

"We'll eliminate, the way Sherlock Holmes did—work it out by deduction," Louise added, rising bravely after the shock.

"Which of the Mrs. Nicholses is quite young—young enough to have a baby of two?"

"Well," began the postmaster again slowly (it was between mails, and he had all the time there was), I don't say but what they all mightn't. Mrs. Jim has five."

"Has she a husband?" interrupted Marie.

Digitized by Google

"M'hm. Yes, Jim's as steady a fellow as you'd like to see—hard worker——"

"Then it isn't Mrs. Jim," Louise interrupted unceremoniously. "What about Mrs. Alonzo?"

"She has three," said the postmaster. "But him and her are away visiting her mother right now. His sister has the children till they get back. Three as nice little tykes as you'd wish to see, all boys."

"And Mrs. Nichols down by the point?" asked Marie.

"She has one. She's a sort of flyaway little creature, and she was an elocutionist before Bob Nichols married her. Let me see. Why, Bob Nichols went off on some fool errand or other last week, selling silver-polish, he said. He's had hard luck, has Bob. That little creature isn't much good to a man with his living to earn—always running round getting asked to recite, and leaving the dishes half the time, like as not."

"I think she's the one," said Louise with conviction. "Has she a baby named Dolores Lulu?"

"Some outlandish name," said the postmaster, "might be that for all I know."

"I have found her! I have found her!
And she waved the turtle soup enthusiastically round her!"

said Louise, breaking into poetry, like Silas Wegg. "Girls, that's our Mrs. Nichols. And can you take

Digitized by Google

us to her house?" she went on, addressing the postmaster.

"Might," said he, "no mails for another hour. You can ride me over and back before that."

So they packed him, too, into the overfull car, and went the way he showed them.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE car stopped before a little tumbledown house at what the girls recognized at once as "the point." It was called so because it jutted out into the river, a sort of peninsula. The house needed paint badly, also repairs. But it had ambitious trellises twining about it in all directions, and straggly vines climbing up them in a discouraged way. In one window—the shades of all of them were pulled up and down at various angles—was an old pickle-bottle full of what had evidently been flowers.

"Don't seem as if anybody was home," remarked the postmaster rather needlessly.

The girls looked at one another blankly.

"What shall we do?" asked Louise.

"We couldn't go in, could we?" Helen suggested.

"I don't see why you shouldn't," said the postmaster. "People run in and out of each other's house a lot here. Mrs. Nichols wouldn't mind."

They debated it a while longer, but finally Louise and Winona, taking courage, went down the walk and tried the door. It was ajar, and after they had knocked and rung and otherwise given it a fair trial, they entered.

There was nobody home at all. There were, however, pictures on the mantel, one of a man and a woman,

Digitized by Google

and another of Dolores Lulu. Everything was in wildest confusion, as if somebody had left in a hurry, and Winona bent down and collected several shoes and stockings that evidently belonged to the baby, and put them into the pockets of her motor-coat.

"Well, this is evidently Dolores' home and mother," said Louise, "but I don't see that it does us much good to know it." She turned to the postmaster, who was following them with interest. "Have they any relatives here? Aren't there other Nicholses that they belong to?"

The postmaster shook his head. "All the Nicholses are cousins, but they don't make much of it. And this particular family was a little looked down on. You see, they were both as lazy as they could be. Wait a bit, though—I'm sure there's a grandmother somewhere. What did you say you wanted to see Mrs. Nichols for?"

"We didn't say," said Marie prudently; but before she had finished Louise began to explain. There was really no reason why she should keep Mrs. Nichol's secrets for her as well as her baby, she explained to the girls afterwards.

"Mrs. Nichols left her baby to the Camp Fire," she told him calmly. "It's down at Mrs. Merriam's now; a red-haired baby in a pink dress."

For some reason the fact that Mrs. Nichols hadn't

Digitized by Google

been more careful of her color scheme seemed to worry all the girls unduly.

The postmaster looked at them in surprise.

"You mean to say that flighty little piece has gone and left the baby on your hands?"

Louise nodded.

"And all her clothes."

The postmaster sat down suddenly on the nearest chair, which hadn't been dusted, and had a hat in it besides.

"Do tell!" he said. "Well, what you can do is simple. Just send it up to the poor-farm. . . . And she never knew you nor anything?"

Louise shook her head.

"We'd never even been introduced," she said, and giggled a little.

The postmaster didn't. He evidently thought it was a serious occasion.

"She'd never even been introduced to you!" he said. "Well, well!"

"I don't think that would have helped so very much," put in Marie, who didn't see much reason for prolonging their stay. "Let's go, girls."

"Not till I've snooped a lot more," announced Louise firmly. "I'm going to see if Mrs. Nichols didn't leave a note on her pincushion, or some such place. She seems to like to leave notes, and I haven't

Digitized by Google

a doubt she did. Come on, girls, we're going to play a lovely game—Hunt the Note. One caramel offered to the fortunate winner."

"Oh, Louise, do you think we ought to?" protested Winona.

"If we don't see anything we'll go away again," Louise answered. "I don't mean to go digging into her bureau-drawers, but just to look on curtains and table-tops and other places where she would put it. Don't you think we ought to?" she appealed to the postmaster, who was fast becoming her principal ally.

"I certainly do," he backed her firmly.

So he and Louise went conscientiously through the little house, till they actually did find the note Louise was in search of. There was very little news in it, as Louise proclaimed mournfully. It only said that Mrs. Nichols had gone to be free and make her own career, and had left the baby with kind friends who would give it every advantage.

"Good gracious!" said Winona when this was read, "she must trust the Camp Fire pretty hard!"

"And now," suggested Marie, who had been prowling restlessly all this time, "won't you please pin that note to the table cover again and come home? I don't see that it's going to do us any good to stay here. We can't get the baby's mother to come back and take her. Do come, girls."

Digitized by Google

"Oh, all right," Louise, who plainly wasn't through hunting for memorials of the dear departed, answered, "but don't be in such a hurry, Marie. All we need to do is to get home in time for supper."

She climbed into the motor again, and they took the postmaster back to his post-office, with news enough to make him a popular man for weeks. They left him Winona's address, and Mrs. Bryan's, and he promised to notify them if Mrs. Nichols took it into her head to come back.

The chauffeur, as well as Marie, breathed a sigh of relief when they were headed towards home.

"Well, anyway, it was a nice ride," said Louise cheerily, as she saw that Marie and Helen were sunk in thought as to what should be done next with the baby. And she began to quote nonsense rhymes, quite, as Helen complained, as if they hadn't any problems on their hands.

She proclaimed cheerfully:

"There was a young man from the Clyde,
Who was often at funerals spied,
When asked who was dead
He grinned as he said,
I don't know—I just came for the ride!"

"Please don't, Louise, I'm trying to think," said Helen plaintively.

"Don't think if it hurts," answered Louise. "And

Digitized by Google

anyway, that is an awfully appropriate limerick. This is as near to a funeral as I ever want to come. Cheer up, girls—we'll hold another Camp Fire meeting, and make fudge, and figure it all out."

"Is this the way, Miss?" the chauffeur, who also appeared to have something on his mind, asked Marie about now.

"I don't know," said Marie preoccupiedly. "Turn to the left—no, the right—no, left, I think. . . . I wonder if the day-nursery would take Dolores part of the time, as a charity."

"Did you say left?" asked the chauffeur.

"M'hm," answered Marie. She wasn't thinking at all of what she was saying. And accordingly, of course, the chauffeur turned to the left, and they all drove on for a long time, thinking in almost united silence about the problem of Dolores Lulu, now peacefully having an afternoon nap over at the Merriam's.

It must have been ten miles more before Winona jerked herself away with a start, from an argument she had been having with Marie. Marie was perfectly certain that it would be necesasry for the girls to pledge a certain sum apiece in order to support the baby, and Winona didn't see why a baby of that age would cost any more than taking in a stray animal.

"The animal's clothes grow on him," protested Marie, "and you know perfectly well that Dolores

Digitized by Google

Lulu's don't. When she's worn out all those awful pink clothes—and the best you can hope is that she will—we'll have to buy her a lot more. And she'll break things and tear them, and have to have special things to eat, and by and bye, if her mother never comes back, there'll be music lessons and having her teeth attended to, and doctor's bills——"

"Why," Winona protested indignantly, "I never saw a healthier baby."

"They all have to have measles and things like that," Marie insisted gloomily. "Why, when I was little I had mumps and measles and diphtheria all in one year. And the next I had—let me see—was it whooping cough?——"

"You certainly are a cheerful person!" said Winona sarcastically. "I don't see any reason why Dolores has to go and be a copy-cat. I never had any of them, and she might just as well take after me."

"Miss Hunter!" interrupted the chauffeur at this point. "Is this the way we came?"

Marie, prevented from making the effective answer she had arranged to make, turned to him, vaguely.

"What did you say, Williams?" she asked.

"This isn't the way we came, I'm certain," he persisted. "Maybe it's just as good a one, but it isn't the way we came. Are you sure you directed me right?"

Digitized by Google

"Why, I didn't direct you," Marie answered him, still a little at sea.

"It was when I asked you if it was to the right or left we were to go," he insisted, "and you said left."

Marie looked shocked.

"Left? Why—why, I couldn't! I am sure I said right."

"Well, I understood you to say left," the chauffeur told her, "and I turned to the left. And this road is one we can't very well turn on for some miles more, and it's getting late."

This was cheerful information.

"Well, there's only one thing to do—go on till you find a place to turn, then turn and go back," Marie offered.

The chauffeur plainly didn't think much of Marie's ideas, but that was all there was to do, so he did it. He put on another speed, and did all he could to reach a place where they could turn back and get to home and supper. His hours were those of Mr. Lane's firm, which meant that he was lawfully entitled to get off at six. And it was near that now.

"Wouldn't it be dreadful if he stopped chauffing at six," whispered Louise, "and took a train home and left us here!"

"Mr. Captain, stop the ship,
I want to get out and walk!"

Digitized by Google

carolled Winona, whose spirits, as they always did, had gone up as the situation became darker.

"You know perfectly well there isn't any train, or we'd have taken it ourselves to get over and see Mrs. Nichols."

"I wish there was something to eat," mourned Helen, who had been very quiet for some time past.

"Oh, if *that's* all you want——" said Louise briskly.

She dived under the seat she was on, rather to the discomfort of the other girls who were packed in it, and produced two packages of crackers, and another bundle, which, when unwrapped, proved to be cheese.

"We always have something like this underneath," she said, "because, nice good car as this is, and sweet as its disposition is, you never do know what a motor is going to do next. There is some milk chocolate somewhere, but I don't know just where. Edith, you're the smallest—do you want to crawl under and see if you can find it?"

"I'll try," said Edith, and, stimulated by the prospect of chocolate, she did wriggle down and hunt till she came triumphantly out with another package.

"Now life will be happier," said Louise with what was very near a purr.

She passed the crackers around, and they cut up the cheese with a hatpin, and broke the chocolate con-

Digitized by Google

scientiously into squares, and felt better. Even the chauffeur, fed with all the crackers and cheese he wanted, took a less gloomy view of life, and was heard to say that he thought he could have them back home before it was too late.

They were almost at a crossroads where the chauffeur thought he could make a turn, when they caught sight of something white waving.

"What's that?" they asked the harried chauffeur, who responded rather crossly that he didn't know, but he thought it was one more accident.

"At this rate we won't get home till midnight," he growled. "It's a cow, likely, that hasn't sense enough to get out of the way. This is the worst trip I ever made."

"No, it isn't a cow at all," said Louise decidedly. "No cow ever waved a white towel at people to stop them, and that's what that is that we see waving. Slow up, Williams."

Williams, very unwillingly, slowed up.

"It's a girl," he said.

"Oh, I'm so glad you stopped!" they heard the girl calling through the half-dark.

Louise and Winona sprang out, they being nearest the doors, and went closer to her.

"What's the matter?" they asked her, nearly together.

Digitized by Google

For answer she sat down flat on the grass beside the road, and began to cry.

"Oh, it's so dreadful!" she sobbed. "I've been going between here, trying to stop somebody going by, and back to the house to look after mother, all day long. I thought nobody would ever come this way. People don't much, and to-day, when I'd have given anything to have somebody, it seems as if there hadn't been a solitary car, or even a buggy."

Winona looked at her. She was about their own age, a rather plump, pretty girl with blue eyes and flaxen hair and a helpless look generally. She was the last person in the world to have anything happen to her that required thinking quick or hard.

"Why didn't you walk to wherever you wanted to go?" asked Louise. "And what's the matter?"

"It's mother," said the girl, still sobbing hysterically. "She slipped on the cellar stairs this morning, and did something to her ankle. I don't know whether she broke it or just sprained it or what, but I couldn't do much for it, and there are just us two here. Father died two years ago, and it isn't much of a farm, so mother and I run it the best we can. It's all right generally, but the farm hands were off to-day. They went over to the county fair to buy stock, and they won't be back for two days. And mother went and hurt her ankle, and——and I don't know what to do!"

Digitized by Google

"Couldn't you have walked to the nearest telephone, and tried to get a doctor?" demanded Marie, who was not very patient with slow-thinking people.

"I didn't dare leave mother that long," wailed the girl. "He's five miles away, and it's scary going through these woods alone."

She got up and came closer to them, as if she was very much frightened—as, indeed, she was.

"What's your name?" asked Louise practically, as they followed the girl into the house. There seemed very little chance of getting very much out of her, so Louise and Winona silently agreed that they would go in and see the mother.

"Mary Plunket," the girl sobbed. "Mary Eugenia."

"They certainly do have names hereabouts," muttered Louise. She couldn't help it.

"We're going in to see your mother," said Winona cheerily, "and then we're going to send the car after the doctor. Now, don't cry any more, Mary. There isn't anything at all to cry about. We're going to attend to everything for you."

Mary mopped her eyes and seemed to feel better. And, after all, it had been a hard situation for the girl, all alone in a lonely place.

"Thank you," she said. "This is the way."

They followed her into the kitchen, where, in the

Digitized by Google

growing dusk they made out the figure of a large woman, lying on the floor.

"I couldn't move her," explained Mary, still a little tearfully, "so I just slipped a pillow under her head, and gave her her meals on the floor."

"She wouldn't be as badly hurt as that if it was just her ankle," Winona whispered to Louise.

They bent over Mrs. Plunkett.

"Your daughter signaled the car we were in, and we came in to see what we could do, and where to send for the doctor," Winona went on. "Are you badly hurt?"

Mrs. Plunkett nodded.

"Yes. I'm sure it's more than my ankle, though I wouldn't want to say so, for fear of worrying Mary. She's so easy to upset. I'm afraid I've hurt my hip."

"Oh, that's bad!" said Louise. "See here, Winnie, do you think any of us had enough sense to bring along a first-aid kit? I think we could bandage up the ankle, anyway, though I don't believe we would dare touch the hip."

"Afraid not," Winona said. "But I think the first thing to do is to send Williams for the doctor. The girls can get out and lighten the car, and he can go as fast again."

"Thank you—the doctor's name is Frost, and he lives nine miles from here," said Mrs. Plunkett, who

Digitized by Google

seemed to be a very clear-headed woman, and able to keep her head, although she was in a great deal of pain. "If you'll send Mr. Williams in here I can give him the directions."

They called Williams, who, to do him credit, was very sympathetic once he knew there was someone in real need of help, and Mrs. Plunkett told him how to reach the doctor. The other girls got out of the car, and he hastened off.

After that they all took their things off and went to work doing what they could for Mrs. Plunkett. Poor Mary was so tired and dazed that she simply stood around in everyone's way, and it was not until Marie had the happy thought of taking her upstairs and putting her to bed that she ceased to cumber the ground in all directions.

While Louise and Winona, with some splints they had made of kindlings, and bandages of the ironing-sheet, bound the hurt ankle up the best way they knew, the others tidied the upset house, and Edith and Marie had the brilliant idea that a meal wouldn't me amiss.

"Do you mind if we get supper?" they asked Mrs. Plunkett who had been shored up with pillows, and made as comfortable as the girls could compass.

"Mind?" she answered. "Bless your hearts, I certainly would be grateful. Poor Mary——"

"Mary's in bed," said Edith. "Adelaide took her

Digitized by Google

up and undressed her, and we're going to bring her up a nice tray of supper as soon as it's ready. Do you like biscuits better, or muffins?"

"Either," said Mrs. Plunkett. "You'll find the flour barrel at the foot of the cellar stairs—and don't slip the way I did before you get there," she added, not unnaturally.

"We won't," they promised, and Edith accordingly lighted herself down with a candle, brought up the flour as if it was the gold of the Indies, and set it down on the table, still navigating as carefully as if the stairs were under her feet.

It did not take them long after that to get a meal of biscuits and ham and eggs and preserves and cookies. Mrs. Plunkett told them they were welcome to anything in the house, and seemed to mean it. They brought a tray to her side where she still lay on the floor, and in spite of her pain she made a fairly good meal.

By the time this was done Williams came back with the doctor, and the two men between them carried Mrs. Plunkett upstairs to bed. Louise, who had specialized on First Aid more than the others, stayed with the doctor while he made his examination, and got him the things he wanted.

"Is it very serious?" she asked him, when he had finished looking things over.

"Not so bad but that it might have been worse," he

Digitized by Google

told her. "There is a dislocation of the hip, and her ankle is badly sprained. But nothing's broken. Of course everything is much worse because she has been lying so long without attention. How long did you say it was since she slipped?"

"About ten this morning," interposed the patient for herself. "And poor Mary's been frightened to death, standing out by the crossroads signaling and waiting for people. If these girls hadn't come along it might have been dreadful. I couldn't bear to have Mary go off and leave me all alone in the house, feeling the way I did."

"It would have been a good deal better for you if you had," said the doctor, "but there's no use worrying about that now. The next thing is to get that hip in some sort of order." He turned to Louise. "How much can you stand, young lady?"

"I can stand anything you want me to in the way of helping," said Louise stoutly. "And I'm strong. If you'll tell me what to do I'll do the very best about it that I know how."

He looked her over.

"Yes, I should think you could," he said. "Well, I have to have somebody to help me. My friend Williams here is going to have to hold the patient steady, and I'll need you besides to take her hands and hold them. Can you do that?"

Digitized by Google

"Why, if that's all——" said Louise disdainfully.

"It may be more than you bargain for," he said.

He stepped to the door and called downstairs for Williams, who had just finished his supper, and accordingly seemed to be feeling better. Williams came up, and at the doctor's directions held the hurt woman while her hip was set. Louise, holding her hands, found that it was, as the doctor had said, not a simple matter to keep herself steady and cheerful, and above all, not to move while the dislocation was put back. It had been out so many hours that the place was very painful, and Mrs. Plunkett fainted as they finished.

"Just as well," said the doctor, stopping Louise when she rose to get water and aromatic ammonia. "I have to do her ankle, and I'd quite as leave do it while she doesn't feel anything."

He felt about her ankle, rubbed it a little, and bandaged it over again.

"It's well done," he said approvingly. "It shouldn't be in this state, with these bandages. Or did you just bandage it lately?"

"Yes," Louise told him, "and we only got here about six. "Mary didn't know what to do, poor child."

The doctor laughed a little.

"I should say the 'poor child' was rather older than you, and a good deal bigger," he remarked. "You've kept your head about you."

Digitized by Google

"Oh, well, that's the Camp Fire training," explained Louise. "And then I've been taking extra First Aid lessons besides. All of us could have done it. Now shall I get the things and try to bring her to?"

"Yes, now you may," the doctor said as he rose from finishing his work on the ankle. "And I think you are going to have to stay all night, some of you."

Louise looked surprised. She had not counted on quite all this when she planned the hunt for Dolores Lulu's mother. But she took it quietly.

"We had better send the machine back with some of the girls, and explain," she said. "Our people must be worrying about us badly."

"I'll telephone to all of them from my house," offered the doctor. "I'm going now, and I'll get word to them in a half hour. Your man can take me home in a hurry, then take your friends back, those of them who don't want to stay. I should suggest that the pretty girl with the brown curls—Winona, did you call her?—would be the best one to stay with you. She looks capable. By to-morrow I can have gotten Mrs. Plunkett a nurse. Will you look after her till then?"

"Indeed I will, and I'm sure I can answer for Winona," Louise insisted.

So it was arranged. The rest went home, stopping to drop the doctor, and to telephone to their respective parents.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Louise and Winona, left alone with the night-watching of Mrs. Plunkett, browsed about the house to see what they could find in the way of things for the night. They did not want to wake Mary Plunkett, who had gone to sleep after a large meal. Mrs. Plunkett herself had had an opiate, and was drowsing.

"We'll just have to do our own foraging," decided the girls, and tiptoed down the hall to Mary's room.

"We really oughtn't to go through her drawers," Winona whispered, turning a serious face to Louise as they paused outside Mary's bedroom.

"Well, what else is there to do?" Louise demanded practically. "We can't sleep in our day clothes. Besides, Mrs. Plunkett said, didn't she, that we were to take anything we wanted?"

Winona nodded.

"All right, then. Come on."

They opened the door, still with that curious feeling of being burglars, and crossed to Mary's bureau, where they found a night-gown apiece, and a bathrobe, not to speak of a woolly wrapper that seemed to be of older date than the bathrobe.

"You'll take the new robe and I'll take the old robe," whispered Louise frivolously, parodying "Loch

Digitized by Google

Lomond," which they had been singing in school lately, "and I'll be in dreamland before you."

"I'd rather have the woolliest one than the newest one," said Winona, "so I'll take the one that looks as if it came out of the Ark."

"How do you know I don't want a woolly one, too?" demanded Louise. "Well, never mind. Here goes."

They tiptoed out again, and downstairs to the sitting-room, where there was a fire still burning cheerfully on the hearth—for it was chilly now at night. There they dressed, or rather undressed.

"Now, how shall we manage?" Louise asked. "Shall we both sit up all night, or shall one of us sleep the first part and the other the last?"

"I think that would be better," Winona advised. "And I don't believe Mrs. Plunkett is going to need such a lot of watching. All the doctor said was that she would have to be given the medicine he left her every two hours, or oftener if she was in much pain or very wakeful."

"That's enough to keep awake," said Louise dolefully. "Well, then, Winnie, which do you want?"

"I can always stay awake longer than you can, Lou, so hadn't I better take the first part of the night? Then I'll call you the last part, because you always are more wakeful in the mornings."

Digitized by Google

"That sounds like common sense," Louise answered, sitting down on the mat before the fire, and stretching out her stockinged feet to it. "All right. I think I can be very comfortable on this couch, if there are enough covers."

"There must be a spare room," suggested Winona.

"I don't doubt it," said Louise, "but it wouldn't be half as much like looking after an invalid to go to bed prosaically in the spare-room. Besides, I know I'd never want to get up, once I really and truly got into bed. No, we'll find ourselves a lot of down quilts, Winnie, and we'll lie down in this nice couch before the fire and go off to sleep. At least I will. You'll go up and smooth Mrs. Plunkett's fevered ankle."

"All right," said Winnie, and accordingly, after they had made a tour of the house, and accumulated several patchwork quilts and one down puff with yellow begonias on it, Louise curled down under her load of covering, and Winnie went off upstairs with one quilt to put over her knees, in case it got chilly in the bedroom.

There was nothing much to do as regards looking after Mrs. Plunkett, except to give her the medicine every two hours. And two hours are a long way apart when you are sitting up long past your regular bedtime. For a half-hour Winona watched her patient with careful eyes. Then, seeing that she slept heavily still,

Digitized by Google

she began to go about the room a little, to see if she could find anything to amuse herself with.

There was not very much in the room that looked exciting. Mrs. Plunkett's bed was the most interesting thing, for it was an old-fashioned four-poster, so large that Winona began to wonder idly whether they hadn't had to take the house down to get it in. There was a Bible, and an almanac, and a big red book that proved on further examination to be a copy of "The World's Thirty Thousand Best and Most Beautiful Thoughts." Winona did not feel as if she wanted quite all of them, so after leafing over the pages a little, she put back the book, thoughts and all. There was a family autograph album, with the handwriting of a good many people who seemed to belong to the Plunkett family of a generation past, and one dashing inscription which proved that there had been autograph hunters in the days of Daniel Webster. It was certainly his signature.

After this exciting discovery Winona sat wondering for a while just how the Plunketts had come by it, and finally decided that they had just written and asked for it, as it was pasted in, not written down. And after all this she discovered to her delight that it was medicine-time.

Mrs. Plunkett roused up and took her medicine, then went back to sleep before Winona could ask any questions about Daniel, even if she had wanted to. Winona

Digitized by Google

looked at the alarm-clock which sat on the mantel. Three hours more of watchfulness.

She eyed "Thirty Thousand Thoughts" again, decided that she would have to be more reduced to boredom than she was now to read that, read through all the jokes in the almanac, read the Book of Ruth, of which she was very fond, and then, casting her eyes around the room once more, to her delight spied a daily paper. Her joy was mitigated on finding that it was an English paper, a *Times* of four months back, but she made up her mind to read it anyway.

"I'll pretend I'm like the man I read about once in the arctic regions, who got all his papers at once every three months, and piled them up in order and read one a day as if they were fresh," she told herself. "And maybe I'll find something interesting that wasn't in the American papers. I wonder how Mrs. Plunkett came by this."

The way she had come by it, as Winnie discovered later, was that the Plunketts had had a summer boarder who had relatives in England, and took the *Times* to get the English point of view about things, and any news he might find that you wouldn't be likely to have over here. This particular paper had escaped the attic because of an advertisement for an Angora cat in exchange for a set of Dickens in good condition. Mrs. Plunkett wanted a cat, and had two sets of Dickens,

Digitized by Google

and hoped that the war might stop in time for her to open negotiations. But all this came out much later.

Winona started faithfully to work on the first page. The print was not like an American paper, and the general look of it as if it was a very serious affair rather daunted her, but there was nothing else to read in the place, and a good deal of time to kill. She read a good two pages of quite useless news about four-months-ago things, and turned thankfully to the editorial page. There might be some interesting letters from readers, or something fluffier than she had found so far. But there wasn't.

There were three letters from various kinds of taxpayers, there was a long editorial on recruiting, there were ever so many things that interested Winnie not at all. She went on disappointedly to the next page, and then she curled down in her seat with a little exclamation of delight, because she had come to the Personals. Personals, in Winnie's experience, were always funny.

These were, some of them. Winnie read through the request of A. E. W., the Burgeons, Somersetshire, for Dickens in exchange for the Angora, without the slightest suspicion that she owed her chance at the paper to it. She read, and giggled as she read, of another hopeful person who wished to exchange willow plumes and a mahogany armchair for a second-hand piano, and

Digitized by Google

of a third lady who offered to give lessons in golf in exchange for others in lace-making.

After she had gone through these, and others like them, and was beginning to nod in spite of them, she went on to the next column, where requests of a graver nature seemed to have been sorted out.

"They must have all gotten what they wanted by this time," she thought drowsily. "Oh, dear, when this is through I'd better get up and wash my face in cold water. I didn't know how sleepy you could get when you didn't want to."

But the next thing she read woke her up wide, without any need of cold water for some hours to come.

"Missing," it read. "Last seen in Danvers, France, Roger Mendon, aged sixteen, blue eyes, light hair, hand with scar across back. Is feared to have been killed in sack of town, but this is not certainly known." It went on to give an address, and the date when he had been last heard from, and to offer a reward.

Winona read it again, scarcely believing her eyes. Then she looked again at the date of the paper, and thought hard. It certainly was a good description of Roger as far as it went. And the scar made it certain. They had not thought about the scar on his hand being a means of identification, because they had all taken for granted that he had gotten it recently. Roger himself had a vague feeling that he had been wounded, and

Digitized by Google

of course they had taken that for part of the wounding.

"Oh, to think of their hunting for him all this time, and thinking he was dead!" thought Winona.

She looked at the clock. There was still an hour before it was time to call Louise.

"Oh, dear, how can I wait?" she thought, for she felt that it would not be fair to Louise to shorten her sleep just because of this.

But the hour still left was not an hour that she found hard to spend. She was wide awake, for one thing, and she could plan for Roger for another.

Roger was doing well, working hard with his papers, and getting on famously with Old Mary, who adored him. Winnie did not see him so very often, though the boys did, because the Pageant had taken up so much of the time of all the girls that meals and school were about all else they could get in. But Billy and Tom, when they dragged him in to an occasional meal, made a great fuss over him, and there was a general feeling that Roger belonged to their crowd, even if he couldn't get around so very often.

One o'clock. Time to give Mrs. Plunkett her medicine again, and also, to Winona's joy, time to call Louise. She found that the sick woman stirred and became restless a little before medicine-giving time, which made her think that the doctor was keeping her asleep so that the pain would not be great; for as soon

Digitized by Google

as she had her medicine she went to sleep more deeply again.

Winona, clutching fast the paper, picked up the lamp and tip-toed down the stairs to wake Louise.

She found her burrowed in a little nest of quilts, with only a red braid trailing over the back of the couch to show that anything human was there. Winona dug her out relentlessly.

"Louise, wake up! The most wonderful thing has happened!" she called.

"Oo-wow!" yawned Louise luxuriously. "What is it, Winnie—it isn't time to get up!"

"Yes, it is, and something wonderful has happened!" repeated Winona, continuing to poke Louise, as well as she could with one hand still holding the paper. She had set the lamp on the mantel over the fire, but she could not bring herself to let go of the paper.

"Oh, don't," said Louise, disgustedly, sitting up and rubbing her eyes. "I'm perfectly willing to get up, but I do hate to be told things like that about it. Aunt Esther always says 'The house is on fire, Lulu!' when I'm visiting her. And I know perfectly well it isn't, and she knows I know it isn't—and I always hop up to see if it is, before I'm awake enough to have any sense. And then she thinks it's lovely."

Winona sat down on the floor and began to laugh.

Digitized by Google

"Now, don't scold," she said. "Just to be a nice, sweet little Louise, and I'll show you. Something wonderful really has happened. I suppose Mrs. Plunkett is all right, for she's sleeping very hard, but perhaps we'd better go up to her room while I show you."

"More tricks and manners!" yawned the still unconvinced Louise. "Oh, well, all right. Come on."

They went back to the sick-chamber, and Winona put Louise in the chair and stood before her, waving the paper.

"I've found an advertisement for Roger!" she said, without any preface.

At this Louise did sit up in excitement.

"What on earth do you mean?" she demanded. "Do you mean that he's being advertised for?"

"That's exactly it," said Winona. "Look at this."

Louise read it through, and looked up.

"Are you sure it's our Roger?" she asked doubtfully. "There might be lots of boys of sixteen with light hair and eyes, and a scar."

"Not the scar," urged Winnie. "And his being in France, and all. Oh, Louise, I think it's almost certain. At least, it's certain enough to help a lot. Oh, I can scarcely go to sleep!"

At this it occurred to Louise that Winona wasn't getting very much sleep, and tried to get her to go and finish the night by the sitting-room fire. But there

Digitized by Google

was so much discussion to finish about Roger, that poor Winona got very little sleep at all that night.

Next morning they let Winona sleep as late as she wanted to. She was awakened about nine by the noise of the motor outside. She sprang up and ran upstairs to dress. She felt a little heavy and sleepy after so much excitement, but a cold bath soon straightened her out, and when she came downstairs again she found that Louise had saved her a hot breakfast before the sitting-room fire.

Mrs. Plunkett was feeling better, she said, and as the doctor had brought a nurse over with him this morning, there was no reason why the girls should stay.

"We'll miss a half-day of school," said Louise, "but it certainly was worth it."

"Worth it!" said Helen Bryan, who had come back in the motor, "I should think it was! And think of the honors you and Winnie must have!"

"Honors?" said Louise blankly.

"You and Winnie did the looking after Mrs. Plunkett, didn't you?" asked Helen. "And as for Winona, looking after Dolores Lulu is going to be an honor, too."

"Good gracious," said Winona, "I'm beginning to know what the poetry-book meant when it said "all his blushing honors thick upon him." We shall have to have baskets for our beads, Lou."

Digitized by Google

"Well, you can laugh about it if you like," said Helen, as the motor whirled them back through the lovely October country, "but it's so."

"Something much more wonderful than that is so, or at least we hope so," said Louise. "Tell her, Winnie, what you found in the *Times* last night, after you'd read the almanac through.

Winona sat up, her eyes sparkling.

"Oh, Helen, the most wonderful thing! I found an advertisement that I'm certain is for Roger, and Louise thinks it may be, too! I can scarcely wait to get home and have him come over and find out about it."

Helen clasped her hands.

"Oh, that *is* wonderful! Poor Roger has so hated not knowing who he was, and having to explain to people about it. And yet he never would make up a last name, you know, because he said it wouldn't be his own, and he was sure his own would come back."

"English for you," said Winona, laughing. "Well, goodness knows I hope his own has come back."

The girls talked on as they rode home. Dolores Lulu, Helen said, was as adorable as ever, and quite unconcerned about her vanished parents.

When they got back Winona was received at her own home with open arms.

"Oh, my dears, we were so frightened!" cried her mother.

Digitized by Google

"And when the car didn't come back, with all of you girls in it, we didn't know what had happened. If you hadn't managed to telephone us when you did, I don't believe I should have slept all night. I hear you had a wonderful adventure."

Winona smiled up at her mother.

"You haven't heard the most wonderful part of it, at all. Mother, where's the nearest place we can get hold of Roger?"

Mrs. Merriam considered.

"I'm afraid there isn't any right now. But as long as Mr. Lane's car is here anyway, why don't you and Louise run out to Old Mary's and leave a message for him to come up here as soon as he gets home?"

Winona considered.

"That's the best way," she said. "I'll see if Louise can."

"Can?" said Louise. "I wouldn't miss it for a farm. Come on, Winnie. You can go home, Williams."

The sorely-tried Williams got out of the car reluctantly, and Winona and Louise hopped blithely in. Louise whirled the car down the road to Old Mary's at a pace that was hardly the proper number of miles an hour.

"This is the most exciting thing that ever happened," she said. "Think of bringing Roger his long-

Digitized by Google

lost last name, and likely a family full of earls back in England! Oh, Winnie, you're a genius!"

"Anybody might have found that in the paper," said Winona with modesty, and also with truth.

"Well, I didn't," said Louise. "By the way, Win., wasn't there something about a reward?"

"Was there?" asked Winnie. "I didn't notice."

She pulled out the precious paper, which they had managed to get away from Mrs. Plunkett by copying for her the advertisement about the cat and leaving it with her. They both read it again.

"Yes, it says reward," acknowledged Winnie. "But you know we couldn't take it. It's only people not like us, horrid people, that take rewards."

Louise looked doubtful.

"Well, it mightn't be quite noble to take it ourselves, but poor dear Camp Karonya does need money ever so much. I think, if it turns out to be really Roger they want, I'll say to the long-lost family, whatever it is, "Oh, of course I could never think of accepting a cent——"

"A penny," corrected Winona. "They're English."

"——I could never think of accepting a penny," amended Louise, "but my favorite charity is uncommonly in need of large amounts of cash. It's called Camp Karonya, and its treasury is as empty as anything."

Digitized by Google

"Well, there's no use counting chickens before they're hatched," suggested Winona, becoming doubtful in her turn. "As you were so sure last night, it may not be our Roger at all."

Louise slowed up, because they were getting near their destination.

"Time will show," said she philosophically. "Here we are, and oh, how lucky! Roger hasn't started out yet."

Roger was indeed to be seen diligently splitting wood for Old Mary's fire, at one side of the house. He was stouter and much more cheerful looking than he had been when they had found him, and he had an air of independence, even in the act of chopping wood, that was an outgrowth of a month of self-reliance. He had, by this time, paid back to the Scouts nearly all they had advanced him for the purchase of his bicycle, and bought himself some much-needed clothes into the bargain.

"Hello, girls!" he called as they met him. "What's up—are you having a picnic all by yourselves, or did you come to make a party call on Mary?"

Louise, who was so excited she could scarcely talk, pointed to the motor.

"You don't know it," she said, "but you're Cinderella, and we're the prince, and that's the pumpkin coach over there. Jump in, my lad."

Digitized by Google

"HELLO, GIRLS," HE CALLED

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Roger stared at her as if he thought she had taken leave of her senses. He never did follow Louise very closely anyway—her wild metaphors, as he called them, confused him.

"I don't at all know what you're talking about, you know," he said. "What the matter? Winona, what does she mean?"

Winona smiled at him brightly.

"Well, it's a long story," she said. "We've found an advertisement that we think perhaps may mean you. And we want you to come up to the house and talk to the grown people about it."

Roger threw down the hatchet with which he had been operating on the wood.

"Where is it?" he demanded. "Let me see it. Have you it with you?"

"Here it is," said Winona, and offered him the old *Times*.

He took it with shaking hands, and turned his eyes to the column she showed him.

"Is it you?" the two girls demanded in a breath.

He looked up at them in a half-dazed way.

"Yes. At least I'm nearly sure. The minute I saw that last name, "Roger Mendon," I was absolutely certain. Certain, as if it really were my name, I mean. And yet——"

Well, get in and come on back with us, and tell us

Digitized by Google

about the yets in the car," said Louise, who was wild with impatience.

He climbed in.

"Just what do you mean by not being quite certain?" asked Winnie.

Roger looked at her gratefully. She had a way of going slow enough not to confuse him.

"Why, it's this way. I feel sure that is my name. But still, supposing, wanting so badly to find out who I was, I had seen an advertisement for some Roger of that description, with some other last name, mightn't I have fancied it belonged to me, too? I—I want it so badly I don't dare to quite believe it."

"I see just what you mean," Winona said sympathetically. "But at least we'll have to write to the people named Mendon, at that address."

"Of course," he said. "Mendon—oh, Winnie, I know it's my name. Only I have to be sure, too."

The older people, curiously enough, seemed to see Roger's viewpoint exactly. But they saw, too, that they should cable to the Mendons, and they did.

"Boy answering description found," Mr. Merriam cabled, and added their address and Roger's description. "Is well, expecting you. Not certain of identity."

"Yes, that's better," Roger agreed. "They might come all the way over and not be my people at all."

Digitized by Google

He looked very sad as he said it, but he was quite right.

"And now what?" asked Louise.

"Why, I'll go on with my work, of course, till they come," Roger answered quietly.

"That's the boy!" applauded Tom. "And the minute an answer comes to the table, somebody'll chase down and tell you."

"Well, I have a lot of time to make up," said Roger.

He picked up his cap and went out to finish his route, with a quietness that surprised them.

"And now for the problem of Dolores Lulu!" said Louise. "I feel like sending over to the London *Times* and advertising for a parent or two for her."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THEY waited excitedly for the cable from England.

"Oh, supposing they should have found their own Roger?" quivered Louise. "Wouldn't it be dreadful?"

"Yes, it would," said Winona decidedly. "But I don't believe they are going to. I'm sure ours is the right one. Anyway, the only thing to do is to try not to think about it. Goodness knows we have enough else to think about."

"I know we have," said Louise, "but I want to think about the Roger affair more than I want to think about anything else, and I don't see why I shouldn't."

"Thought's free," said Winona placidly. "Only let me remark that you have a lot more sewing to do than you ever had in your life before, and that we haven't decided one thing about the Nichols baby yet. And mother says that if we keep her much longer she'll never be able to let her go, she's getting so fond of her."

"My mother says she'll take her next week," said Louise. "She says one child in the house, more or less, doesn't count when you have six anyhow."

"Oh, do you have to?" said Winona plaintively—which would seem to show that Mrs. Merriam was not the only person who had become attached to Dolores.

"We do," said Louise. "But that's a minor detail,

Digitized by Google

as Roger is always saying. Oh, dear, when do you suppose that cablegram is coming?"

It came in four days after the time they calculated that the cable from their side could have reached England. "Am coming over. Detain boy till my arrival. Wilfred Mendon."

"Detain him!" said Louise, indignantly, when she heard this. "It sounds as if he was a criminal."

"Well, they couldn't tell from the cable we sent whether he was well or crazy. Not being certain of his identity might have meant a lot of awful things," soothed Winona. "Oh, dear, the closer it gets the more excited I am!"

"So say we all of us!" said Louise.

Roger himself seemed quieter about it all than anybody else. And when at last Wilfred Mendon telegraphed from New York that he had arrived safely, and was coming out to the Merriams, he took it quietly still.

"I'm trying not to expect anything," he confided to Winona. It would be too awful to find that none of it were true."

It was about three in the afternoon when a carriage drove up from the station with a man inside. He alighted from it, and came slowly up the porch, where Mr. and Mrs. Merriam and Winona were waiting for him. The others had not come, because they had not

Digitized by Google

expected him so early. Roger had planned to be there at four, when they expected that Mr. Mendon could make connections.

"Is this the Merriam house?" he asked. He was tall, and fair like Roger, and the moment Winona saw him she was nearly sure that Roger belonged to him.

Mr. Merriam came forward and greeted him, and introduced him to Mrs. Merriam and Winona.

"You are Mr. Mendon, who sent the cablegram?" Mr. Merriam asked. "I hope you will find that Roger is really the boy you want."

"Indeed, I hope so, too," Mr. Mendon answered quietly, though his face looked strained and anxious. "Is he here?"

"Not yet," they explained. "We imagined that you could not get here till four, so Roger said he would work till it was time to get here and just meet you."

"He felt as if he couldn't stand the strain, I think, of waiting here with nothing to do," explained Winona eagerly.

Mr. Mendon looked at her with interest. She had spoken unconsciously, out of her great interest in Roger and the whole affair; but she shrank back a little, remembering that English girls didn't join in conversations with their elders as much as American ones, and that Mr. Mendon might think she had no right to say anything.

Digitized by Google

But Wilfred Mendon looked at her with attention.

"Do you mean to say he is in a fit condition to work? I thought—I understood from your cablegram that he was unbalanced."

"Not one bit!" said Winona indignantly. "He's one of the brightest, nicest boys I ever knew in my life. He just can't remember a lot of things."

Mr. Mendon looked relieved.

"If the boy is indeed my nephew, what you tell me is a great relief," he said, which struck Winona as rather selfish—for why shouldn't somebody else's nephew have as good a right to be balanced, she wondered?

"Roger is in a way the charge of my son and daughter," Mr. Merriam explained—"that is, as far as he is anyone's—he is supporting himself, and doing it splendidly. It was Winona, here, who first found him, and brought him home."

Mr. Mendon unbent still more.

"I should be glad to hear about it all," he told Winona, who smiled at him sunnily, and began to tell him about it as interestingly as she could, because, "poor man," she thought, "he'll be dreadfully worried till Roger comes."

"It wasn't any trouble," she explained. "Louise Lane—that's my chum—says it was all her making a wish. She wished for a thrilling adventure—and Billy

Digitized by Google

said he was sure she'd get it if she wished too hard. We went out automobiling in Louise's father's car one day, and found him out in the country, by a spring, where he had tried to get a drink. You see, he had fainted."

"Fainted!" said Mr. Mendon.

"He was hungry and worn out," Winona explained. "He had tried to get work and couldn't. One thing—I think he had been hurt, and then his accent made people think he was making fun of them. Anyhow, he's had a hard time, and he wasn't well. All he needed was a little rest and believing in. When he had rested a little and found we liked him—I don't mean just us, but people here—that folks were friendly, you know—he straightened out, and was well and almost happy. He's strong, and works very hard, and it doesn't seem to hurt him at all. Everyone likes him so much."

Mr. Mendon knitted his brows.

"What does he do?" he asked.

"He delivers papers," Winona informed him, "and does some Latin tutoring—not much, though, for he hasn't time—and does chores for Old Mary, that he lives with, for his board. That's a lot for one boy, don't you think so? But it doesn't seem to hurt him a bit. He's strong and well. Oh, yes, and he goes to the Scout meetings regularly, and once in a while he even finds time for parties."

Digitized by Google

Mr. Mendon didn't look particularly pleased at this description. "If he is my nephew," he said again, "he is amply able to pay for any obligations he is under to anyone."

Winona began to think that Roger's uncle might have a sweeter disposition.

"He isn't under any," she explained patiently. "I've been telling you; he supports himself entirely. The Scouts did loan him some money for a bicycle, but he's paid it back. Oh, you don't know how clever he is!"

"I evidently will owe you—or the boy's relatives, if he is not my Roger, will owe you—very hearty thanks for befriending him," said the accurate Mr. Mendon.

As a matter of fact, the poor man was so worried and excited, as Winona found afterwards, that he scarcely knew what he was saying. The wait seemed, to all of them, interminable, though Roger really came a quarter of an hour earlier than he had said he would —being worried and excited himself.

He whizzed up on his bicycle, and flung himself off hurriedly.

"Is he here yet?" he asked anxiously. "Does he think I'm the one?"

Mr. Mendon had gone into the house a little time before, to freshen up a little, and it had occurred to

Digitized by Google

Mrs. Merriam that tea might be what he needed. So she had made him some, and he was drinking it.

"Yes, he's here," said Winona. "He went into the house to wash his face and hands, and I think he's having tea. He's——"

Before she could say anything more, Roger went into the house, and Winona followed him. At the sight of him, Wilfred Mendon sprang up, setting the teacup carefully down, however, even in his agitation.

"Roger!" he cried. "My dear Roger!"

"Oh, Uncle Will!" said Roger.

They gripped hands warmly, and then the Merriams slipped out, to leave the two to themselves awhile. There was no question about it; Roger had found his people.

After a little while the two came out on the porch, where the Merriams were still gathered.

"There's no question about it," said Mr. Mendon. "And I can never thank all of you enough for your kindness to the boy."

"And has Roger remembered?" Winona demanded. "He said he thought he could if he was told about it."

"I've remembered a lot," Roger answered for himself. "I know the rest will come to me by degrees. And, Winona, I was right about having sisters. Uncle Will says I have."

Digitized by Google

"And your father?" Winona asked. "Couldn't he come?"

"His father was killed a year ago, in France," Mr. Mendon explained.

"Oh, poor Roger!" exclaimed Winona. "You had forgotten that, too!"

"It came back to me with the other things Uncle Will told me," Roger said quietly. "I heard it just a little while before I was hurt myself."

"I am sorry," said Winona simply.

"And now, can you tell us about it?" Mrs. Merriam asked. "What really were the circumstances that led to Roger's ending over here, with his memory gone, and no money?"

"That I do not know," said Mr. Mendon. Winona noticed that in spite of his precise manner, he kept his hand on Roger's knee or on his arm, as if he was afraid the boy would slip away from him once more. "We only know what happened up to the time of his disappearance."

"And that was?" asked Mr. Merriam.

Mr. Mendon settled back more comfortably in his chair, though he still kept a hand on Roger's knee.

"The boy was at school in Belgium," he explained. "When the war broke out, naturally we tried to get him home, but he had volunteered with the Belgian Boy Scouts. We heard from him at long intervals,

Digitized by Google

but we couldn't do anything, though his mother was nearly wild with anxiety, for Roger is the only son. His father felt he had no right to keep him from the work, especially as he himself was with his regiment. I've been at home, doing war-office work"—Mr. Mendon flushed, as if he was embarrassed, and then added: "I've tried to get in the army, but I could not. Physical deficiencies—bad heart. So I have been staying to look after my sister-in-law and the children as best I could, along with the routine work. I've been hunting for Roger ever since the last news came through, that he had slipped over to France with some messages. But the town he went to was taken, and that's the last we heard of Roger. We were nearly sure he was dead, but there was just a chance, and we've hung on to that chance. A French officer who was exchanged told me that he thought the boy might have been taken prisoner. Of course we weren't building on that, for the Boy Scouts don't get much consideration from the other side."

"What does he mean?" Winona whispered to her mother.

"They rank as spies," her mother whispered back to her.

"Oh!" said Winona, and shivered. She felt, too, like taking hold of Roger to be sure he was there. The thought of all the horrors this quiet lad had gone

Digitized by Google

through made her feel as if everything she had ever said or done was so little—so worthless! And Roger had gone on with his life here, she remembered, just as doggedly and quietly.

She looked up at Mr. Mendon and spoke out the end of her thought.

"But, do you know, I believe it was just as brave of him, and just as wonderful, to pick himself up here, never knowing his name or anything about himself, and go to work and look after himself, and be brave and cheerful about it. Anybody could fight—or they might, if they had to—but there are lots of boys that would have given up in despair if they'd had this to go through."

Roger flushed up.

"Oh, come, Winnie, that's not so. I've had a fine time. If it hadn't been that you were all good to me I never could have weathered it."

"Well, how do your recollections piece with what your uncle tells you, my boy?" asked Mr. Merriam mercifully; for he saw that Winona's words embarrassed Roger, though Mr. Mendon's eyes had brightened at what she said, and he looked very happy.

"It's pretty clear," Roger said. "I must have been hurt, struck on the head, you know—and that's what made me forget. As for being sent over here to Canada on a ship, I don't see yet how that happened. No

Digitized by Google

—after all, things aren't much clearer. I suppose we'll have to wait till the war's over before we find out."

"I have Roger back, and that's all I care about," replied his uncle. "We had given up hope; indeed. we merely put the advertisement in the *Times* because his mother would leave nothing undone."

"I feel as if I couldn't get back to her quick enough," said Roger. "Good heavens, Win, suppose you hadn't seen that advertisement?"

Mr. Mendon roused himself to look at Winona again. In his country, evidently, fifteen-year-olds, no matter how gay and graceful and pretty, did not do things as they did in America.

"You seem to have arranged the whole affair, my dear young lady," he observed. "Is it to you that my sister-in-law and I owe all our thanks?"

"Indeed, no," protested Winnie. "Louise and Billy and my brother had quite as much to do with it, straight through, as I did. I simply happened to find the advertisement first. And Billy and I found Roger. I'm—I'm a lucky finder, that's all," she ended, dimpling. She was getting so that she was not at all afraid of Roger's stiff uncle.

"There is the question of the reward," he went on, getting stiffer.

But here Winona became stiff, too.

Digitized by Google

"You don't take rewards for finding your friends," she declared.

"But Lady Mendon is rich," said Mr. Mendon; and at that Winona caught her breath. Was Louise's wild idea right, and Roger a duke or something?

"Lady Mendon?" she asked.

"My nephew is Sir Roger," explained Mr. Mendon, which was quite grandeur enough for Winona. She was quiet for a moment. Then she began to laugh.

"Oh, Roger, Roger, isn't it funny!" she cried. "Just think, delivering papers, and being Sir Roger all the time! Oh, how excited everybody's going to be—if they've kept any of the papers they ought to frame them, with a little label on the frame, 'Delivered by a real baronet.' 'Sir' is a baronet, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is," Roger admitted; "but if you're going to let the girls make a fuss over it I'll get straight out."

"Oh, I wasn't," said Winona; but she looked a little disappointed.

"I think we might have just one party about it," she said.

"If you want to," said Roger resignedly; while his uncle looked still more amazed. The American girl's position among her boy friends still seemed to surprise and pain him.

"No, never mind," said Winona. "I can see how

Digitized by Google

you feel. But you and your uncle needn't think you're going to slide off to England without saying good-bye to anybody. You needn't tell anybody that you're baronets and things, but, Roger, I do think you might stay with us a day or two, just to pick up loose ends and say good-bye to us."

"I'd like to," Roger answered. "Uncle Wilfred, do you mind?"

Uncle Wilfred, who looked a little tired, poor man, with the strain—Winona remembered that he had said he had a weak heart—said that he did not mind, but that he would stay at the hotel. He had left his bag there, before coming to the Merriam house. And, though the Merriams insisted on his coming to stay with them, he was quite firm that he would not. So finally they left it that way—that Roger was to spend a couple of nights with the Merriams, who were about in the centre of town, and from whose house it would be much simpler to arrange about stopping the things he was doing.

After he had gone back to the hotel to see his uncle awhile, and have a talk to him about his home affairs, Roger came back to the Merriams. Tom and Billy had arrived by this time, and the whole story had to be gone over again.

"Congratulations, old boy!" said Tom cheerfully.

Digitized by Google

"We always knew you were a duke or something, didn't we, Bill?"

"Louise did," said Billy, grinning. "Has anybody thought to telephone over to Louise? She ought to hear the glad tidings, too."

"Glad tidings?" said Winona regretfully. "When Roger's going off to England, and will never come back, maybe? You know you may not, Roger. Once you get back you'll never remember us, and this town."

"Indeed I will," Roger answered earnestly. "You must think I am very ungrateful and very selfish, if you think I could ever forget any of you, or how you saw me through. And, anyway, when the war is over you are all four coming to stay with me at Grayle."

"Grayle? Is that the name of the place you live it? Have you remembered that?" Winona wanted to know.

"Yes—or Uncle Wilfred helped me remember. It's lovely. It's a big old red brick house, far back in trees, with a great deal of ground—almost enough to make a little village, you'd think here. And we have deer, and very good shooting and fishing. You fellows will have an awfully good time. And the mater will be crazy about Winona. She'll like Louise, too, but I have a feeling that Lou will shock her a bit."

Roger, after two months of thorough Americanism,

Digitized by Google

grinned a little at the thought of Louise among the classic shades of his English home.

"Who'll I shock?" Louise herself demanded, walking in on them where they sat around the living-room table, talking earnestly.

"You'll shock my mother, when you come to visit her after the war is over," Roger answered coolly.

"Oh, Roger, I'm *so* glad!" she cried, though she did not specify whether she meant she was glad of being able to shock Lady Mendon, or of Roger's good fortune. "You really have found your people!"

"Really," Roger answered thankfully, "and my memory. And when you came in we were talking about how all of you are coming to stay with my mother after the war."

"I'll do my best in the shock line, if that's what is expected of me," Louise answered. "But, Roger, are you really going straight back and get all torpedoed up by unpleasant little submarines? You don't need to a bit. Stay right here and live—we'd be delighted to have you."

"Oh, I expect to live," said Roger; "but I think I'll have to risk the submarines. You only hear of the people who are drowned, you know, not of all the boats that get across safely."

Louise shrugged her shoulders.

"I suppose so. Well, shall we take the trolley

Digitized by Google

out to Old Mary's, or would you rather go out alone, Roger?"

"No; all of you come," said Roger. The five of them seemed to feel—Roger as much as any—that time was precious, and that until Roger went none of it was to be wasted by staying apart.

They rode out to Old Mary's, and the girls talked to her while the boys helped Roger pack.

"Wirrasthrue!" said Old Mary when she heard that Roger's uncle had really come for him. "Little did I think that I'd only have me boy this little while. But there, he was real quality, so he was, and how could I hope to keep him splittin' my wood and takin' out the ashes for me? Though he did it all like a real gentleman, never a word or a kick. It's long before I'll find another like him, or you either, my dears."

"I know it," said Winona. "Oh, what's the use of going out in automobiles and finding friends, and then just have to give them back to their uncles?"

"None," echoed Louise dolorously. "The next time we bring anybody home in the machine that can't remember who their uncle was, we won't try to help them locate him."

"Ah, ye're jokin' now," said Old Mary; "but it was the grand deed ye did. Ye should get Camp Fire medals, or whatever it was they give you, for doin' it."

Digitized by Google

Louise was silent for a moment, then, like the man in the funny paper, "I never thought of that!" said she.

"Neither did I," said Winona. "It was just a happen-so. Oh, no, Mary that wasn't like the things you get National Honors for. They're hard work, or anyway trying hard about something. This was different."

"Wait and ye'll see," said Old Mary obstinately. Then Roger came out, with a suit-case full of his things, and she threw her arms around his neck.

"Ye'll be thinkin' of yer poor old Mary that ye cut the kindlin's for, won't ye now, me boy, in yer grand palace in England? Ye won't forget me?"

Roger hugged her back heartily, and did not seem a bit ashamed of himself for doing it.

"Indeed I will think of you," he answered. "And I'll do more than that, Mary. When the war's over if you want to you shall come and live in the village near our place, with a little house all your own, and money to live on, and never have to work a day."

"Sure it's the fine dream, lad," said Mary. "Thank ye for the wish, whether it come so or not."

"We've just time to get the six-o'clock trolley," interrupted Tom, who had been keeping an eye on his watch. "Good-bye, Mary. We have to take your boy away from you. Come on, kid."

Digitized by Google

Roger tucked an envelope into Old Mary's hand, and they hurried away.

"I've left her some money, enough to pay for all the time I stayed with her," he told them after they had caught the trolley and were on their way home. "And I'm going to send over from England a money-order to your father, Tom, to be put in bank, and an income paid to her from it every week. She's strong, but after all she's old, and she mightn't always be able to look after herself. I didn't tell her, because there was just a chance she might have objected. She always does object to things for awhile first, unless they're entirely arranged. If you tell her the money's there she'll take it."

"But—but, Roger, can you afford it?" asked Winona a little diffidently.

"Perfectly well," he answered. "These are hard times in England, and we're all being careful; but we're rich as money goes in England. Of course"—he smiled—"it isn't like some of your American millionaires. But it was about six thousand pounds a year before the war. It's less now, I suppose, but not much less, because it didn't come from land, but Cornwall mines. I imagine they're needing everything they can get out of the mines right now."

"And you sold papers," said Louise faintly.

"All Cornwall wouldn't do a fellow any good if

Digitized by Google

he couldn't remember where it was," remarked Billy practically. "Of course he sold papers. So would I if I got the chance, if I got lost in England and couldn't remember where my ancestral three-story frame house was."

"Oh, you!" said Louise disdainfully. Evidently, in her present frame of mind, there was no such thing as a comparison between Roger, the romantically discovered heir, and Billy, just an American boy, who knew who his people were and expected to earn his own living.

"The worst thing is," remarked Roger, "that poor Wilfred is going to die on the way over of terror, if I don't quit what he calls 'Americanisms.' I didn't know I had so many—you fellows were always ragging me about my English ways. Now it appears I have the other kind, too."

"Well, if they don't like your ways in England, come back to us," urged Winona cheerfully.

"Oh, I'm coming back," he said, "but you're coming over first, you know."

"We certainly will," she answered. "And we'll bring Old Mary, and you can give us cottages in the village, too, and we'll all live in a row and be happy."

"Wish you could!" said Roger in a heartfelt voice.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

ROGER went two days later. He had his way—there were no parties, nor other demonstrations. Only the Scouts did slip over by twos and threes to say good-bye; and eventually the four went up to New York to see him off. After they had done it they felt so mournful that Billy proposed going to the theatre, for it was a matinée day. So they got seats for the "Music-Master," and if they did cry, as Louise said afterwards, they enjoyed doing it, anyway.

"It feels like a wake," she remarked as they streamed out in quest of a tea-room, for Billy was determined to do the thing up properly; "Celebrating the departure of the dear deceased by a party!"

"There's no use feeling any worse than you have to," Billy reminded her. "I'm going to miss old Roger, but after all I have something still to live for."

"You're horrid, and you're jealous!" said Louise.

And as this wasn't as far from the truth as it might have been—for both Billy and Roger had rather considered Winona their own special girl-chum—Billy was naturally cross. When Billy was cross you could tell it by his dignified silence.

"Tom, you take Louise, and let me have Billy,"

Digitized by Google

Winona whispered to her brother, with whom she happened to be walking.

"What for?" asked Tom, who hadn't seen anything amiss.

"Cats' fur," answered Winona flippantly. "I want to talk to Billy about something."

"Girls are queer," said Tom, but he made the change she asked.

Winona slipped her hand into Billy's arm, where he stalked along in severe silence.

"What tea-room are we going to?" she asked. "And oh, Billy, do you suppose I can find the kind of cake I want? It has thick pink icing all over the top and sides, and whipped cream inside, and the rest is just cake."

Billy smiled in spite of himself.

"I shouldn't think there'd be much rest," he suggested. "But I'm sure if they have those cakes at any tea-room they'll have them at this. We're going to the tea-room at one of the big hotels."

"Oh, good!" cried Winona, giving what would have been a prance if she hadn't remembered in time that she was in a city, and must be dignified. "And —Billy, English Rogerses are very nice, but after all I think American boys are dears, don't you?"

"I don't see why you should say that," said Billy loyally—but he brightened. "Roger was no end of a

Digitized by Google

fine chap. I'm awfully glad we had the chance to find him."

"So am I," said Winona. "And I'm glad we made him feel as if he really belonged. But after all just us four will be nice again."

By this time Billy was quite all right. Indeed, he was so all right that he voluntarily moved up to the others so that they were four abreast, bringing him next to Louise, who smiled at him forgivingly.

"We're going to the Knickerbocker to have tea, Louise," he said amiably. "We picked that out because you like it."

"Hotel Short-pants?" asked Tom, grinning. "One of the best places I know for tea."

"Oh, I love it!" said Louise—and peace was restored. Billy and Louise had a way of falling out once in a while, but it was never very serious. And as Winona was, where they were concerned, what her brother called the Original Dove of Peace, when she was around they never had a chance to get serious at all. Billy ordered not only the little cakes Winona had suggested, but several other kinds, whose icings wore all the colors of the rainbow—and Louise, for once, forgot that she mustn't get plump again if she wanted to remain a fit person to be Jeanne D'Arc in the tableaux. She ate as many cakes as she possibly could,

Digitized by Google

and drank three cups of tea, though she normally disliked tea very much.

As they sat, very well contented with life and each other, Winona suddenly looked up, as you will when someone looks at you intently. She found that someone was staring at her—one of the waitresses. And though she did not know the woman at all, there was something in her face that was very familiar. She had a rather thin face, with slanting gray eyes, and an enormous amount of red hair, so much that it was twisted tight as if to make it stay the way it should.

"Louise, who do you suppose that is?" she whispered, directing Louise's eyes to the waitress.

"Nobody I ever saw," said Louise carelessly.

"Well, she's somebody who's seen you, or me, or one of the boys."

Louise looked the waitress over more carefully after that.

"She might be——"

"Well?"

"I seem to sort of remember her," Louise said. "Wait a minute."

Winona waited as patiently as she might, while Louise stopped eating and thought hard. The boys looked at the waitress and thought too, but she suggested nothing whatever to them, they said.

"I think I know," said Louise, "but it doesn't do

Digitized by Google

you much good, if you really want to know lots about her. She was somebody in the village near Camp Karonya. I remember buying eggs of her once, when I was on the marketing squad."

Winona looked at her again.

"I never did," she said. "That doesn't help me one bit. Don't you remember the names of the people you used to buy eggs from?"

Louise shook her head.

"No. We never bothered to find out. We'd just go trotting along till we saw some hens that looked industrious, and we'd go in and ask their owner if she had any eggs to spare, and what they were. If she had and we could afford her price, we'd buy the eggs. Sometimes she'd—or he'd—tell us the names of the hens, but we didn't often get as far as the proprietors. There was one old Cochin China thing named Brighty, I remember, that we got quite intimate with, but we never did know her last name at all. And a rooster named——"

"Oh, for mercy's sake!" interrupted Winona, half-laughing. "Louise, what earthly good do you suppose that rooster's name is to me right now? What I want to know is why that waitress looks so interested in us. We're just ordinary folks. We don't look as if we were millionaires, or thieves or anything."

Billy, who had been watching her with interest, here took a hand in the game.

Digitized by Google

"I don't know who she is, and I never saw her before, but I'll tell you who she looks like," said he calmly.

"Who?" said everybody in breathless unison.

"Why, your little adopted baby, that the Camp Fire is making clothes for, and quarreling over," he said. "She has the baby's hair and eyes exactly, allowing for age and so forth."

They all sat back and regarded Billy with respect.

"Then you mean——" said Winona.

"I don't mean a thing. But she's just as likely to be the baby's long-lost parent as anything you like, if she really is a woman from the village near the camp, and really watching you girls with interest."

"Oh, how *thrilling!*" said Winona and Louise in one breath.

"Wait a bit," said Tom provokingly, "you aren't sure about it."

"But you can be, though," Winona remembered. "Lou, do you remember whether the house where you bought the eggs of that woman was the same one where the postmaster took us the day we tried to find the baby's mother?"

Louise considered hard again.

"I ought to remember," she admitted. "Let me think."

So they continued to allow Louise to think, eating their cakes very quietly.

Digitized by Google

"I don't think so," she decided at length. "It doesn't seem to me it was the same house a bit."

Winona looked disappointed. Then——

"She might have moved," she remembered.

Tom began to laugh at about this stage of the game.

"I think you're the funniest girls I ever saw," he said. "In the name of common sense, why don't you call that red-haired waitress over here, and *ask* her if she's Creme d'Yvette's mother, or whatever the kid's name is? That would answer your question, unless you're having a nice time guessing."

But both the girls looked alarmed at the idea of this.

"Suppose she was——" said Winona fearfully, "and——"

"Suppose she wasn't?" said Louise in the same breath?

"In that case it would be dreadful," Tom answered both, grinning. As he spoke he signaled to their own waitress, who drew near.

"Ask that waitress over there, please, the one with the red hair, to come over to this table for a minute," he said relentlessly.

"Oh-h!" said both the girls, but they did not contradict Tom's order. Indeed, they could not, very well.

They waited till the red-haired woman's duties allowed her to come over. They could see she did it reluctantly.

Digitized by Google

"She doesn't want to," commented Billy. "That makes it more likely she's the lost parent than ever."

"Why does she, then?" Louise wanted to know.

"We aim to please our patrons," Billy explained. "She has to be polite to us—we're guests here. Don't you see?"

"Ye-es," Louise answered. "But it doesn't seem a bit fair."

Billy lifted an eyebrow.

"It wasn't particularly fair, the way she wished that baby on the Camp Fire, if she really was the one," he said quietly.

"Well, we'll see," Tom said. "Here she comes."

"Oh, who'll talk to her?" cried Louise, in a panic.

"I will," offered Billy. "Or Tom can."

"You're welcome to the job," said Tom generously.

So when the red-haired waitress approached it was Billy Lee who fixed her with his eye.

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Nichols," he said serenely.

"Good gracious!" whispered Louise. "Isn't that clever! Now I'd have asked her—and see!"

For the red-haired woman was answering to her name as naturally as possible!

"How do you do?" she said. "I—I don't know as I place you."

"Oh, you don't know me," Billy assured her politely. "My name is Lee, William Lee. This is my

Digitized by Google

friend Thomas Merriam. It's Miss Lane and Miss Merriam that you know."

"I—I don't know's I do," said Mrs. Nichols, seeming to wish to get away.

"Oh, yes you do," said Louise, taking a hand in the conversation now that Billy had made Mrs. Nichols admit who she was. "I used to buy eggs of you last summer. I was one of the girls camping on the edge of the river. Now do you remember?"

"I—I got to be going," said Mrs. Nichols, who didn't seem at all enthusiastic over the reunion.

Here Billy took a hand again.

"I don't want to keep you from work," said he, "but you left your baby on the hands of the Camp Fire, and you will have to come and see their Guardian about it. If you don't I'll go speak to the management about you, and they'll probably make you."

This, as Billy confessed afterwards, was pure bluff, because he had no idea whether the management would care one bit. It was more likely than not that they wouldn't.

But it worked.

"Oh, say, don't do that," pleaded Mrs. Nichols. "They think here I'm not married, and it would mix things up if you went telling them things. If you got to see me you got to. I'll be off duty at six. I can talk to you then."

Digitized by Google

"We'll wait for you right here, and go over to some other hotel and talk about it," said Billy relentlessly. "And if you don't show up——"

Whatever he meant to do, she certainly was afraid he'd do it, for she promised faithfully to come back to them, and did.

"What could you do to her?" whispered Louise, looking at Billy with large round eyes of admiration.

"I don't exactly know," he admitted, "but there must be something that covers the case, and I expect she knows that. Anyway, she ought to talk to us about it."

They finished their ample tea in a state of great respect for Billy Lee, and when Mrs. Nichols actually appeared in her street clothes and meekly went with them, they respected him still more.

"How is she?" she burst out as soon as they were on the street. "How is Dolores Lulu? Did you make up that pink silk dress for her, the way I said?"

Winona did not grasp the fact, which Tom pointed out to her a little later, that Mrs. Nichols seemed to regard the Camp Fire as simply a group of nurses for her convenience.

"Yes, indeed, I did," she answered. "But it wasn't becoming to her pink, so we boiled it out white and put a little blue sash with it. She looks sweet in it."

"I like pink for babies," said Mrs. Nichols obsti-

Digitized by Google

nately, "and a mother's wishes ought to come first. I don't want you to do that any more."

She looked quite wronged at the idea that they had gone contrary to her ideas of what was fitting: indeed, her attitude straight through was that anyone who was offered the boon of looking after her baby ought to be so grateful that they should accept her orders meekly.

"But, my dear Mrs. Nichols," interposed Billy, "you had no right to abandon your baby to the Camp Fire Girls that way. They might have put it in the poor-house."

"A lovely baby like Dolores Lulu, with sweet manners like she has? Indeed they wouldn't," said Mrs. Nichols hotly—and indeed there was a good deal in what she said, for Dolores Lulu did have the sweetest ways possible.

Billy dropped back after that, and spoke in a low voice to Tom.

"She may not want to see Mrs. Bryan," he said. "Tommy, you'd better long-distance her. She can get the six-three and be here in an hour, if you get her. We'll have to hold on to the baby's mother that long."

"Great idea," said Tom, and slipped away to the nearest telephone, while Billy, seeing that Mrs. Nichols was still deep in conversation with Winona, explained matters to Louise.

"It means we'll have to ask her to dinner some-

Digitized by Google

where here," he suggested, "and make her as happy as possible, so she won't get away."

Louise nodded wisely. It felt very thrilling indeed, and she forthwith began to help Winona to tell Mrs. Nichols all the things she could think of about the baby.

"I wish I could tell her how badly the poor little thing's clothes needed mending when we got her," she thought. But she knew that wouldn't be wise.

"We would be glad if you would take dinner with us somewhere near here," she suggested sweetly, and Winona unsuspectingly seconded the invitation. So the four of them—Tom was back from his errand very shortly—went to a tea-room for dinner. Their united funds wouldn't stand a large hotel dinner, they found on a hurried consultation.

They lingered over the meal as much as they could. There had been no opportunity to tell Winona of their dark scheme, but it was not really necessary. Billy watched the door with an anxiety that she could not understand, but that the others did. And—just as the three conspirators had begun to wonder what further excuses they could find for detaining Dolores Lulu's errant mother, Mrs. Bryan walked in.

"Here is Mrs. Bryan now," said Billy calmly, though there was a good deal of relief in his voice, too. "She's the person for you to talk to."

"I don't see anything to talk about," said Mrs.

Digitized by Google

Nichols. "As far as I can see Dolores Lulu is being well taken care of. I haven't any complaints to make."

Billy looked aghast at this view of the situation, but knew how to meet it only in one way—by introducing Mrs. Nichols to Mrs. Bryan and retiring gracefully into the background.

Mrs. Nichols found she had a grown person to deal with here, and that this was a little different from talking to Winona and Louise. She tried to continue to assume that there was nothing to discuss, but Mrs. Bryan wouldn't let it go that way, at all.

"My girls can't take care of little Dolly indefinitely," she said bluntly. "Even if they wished to I couldn't let them, as far as my advice goes. That is, not as long as you hold rights over her, and could come back at any time and take her away. You can see for yourself that wouldn't be fair. Now, what do you wish to do? Will you take back Dolores Lulu, and look after her, or will you let Mrs. Merriam or me or some other responsible person have legal charge of her, with the understanding that she is to continue to be the Camp Fire's protégé? It must be one way or the other."

"I dont' see why it isn't all right the way it is," said Mrs. Nichols obstinately.

"Because we are not going to let it be the way it is," Mrs. Bryan answered her. "Do you want your little girl sent to the poorhouse?"

Digitized by Google

"Oh, nobody'd do that," said Mrs. Nichols placidly.

"We are talking in a circle," said Mrs. Bryan, keeping her patience. "Here's the alternative. You take back Dolores, if you are able to look after her, or we'll hand her over to the proper authorities."

"(Oh, do you think she would?" whispered Louise. "That poor, dear little baby!)"

"Or else you sign a paper—mind, I do not say the girls want this, only that they may, as a favor to you, do it—you sign a paper promising not to interfere with the little girl's upbringing, and to give us the rights of guardians over her."

'I—I don't want any of those things. I want to be able to take her back whenever I want to," said Mrs. Nichols.

They argued for a little while longer, and finally Mrs. Nichols said she would come out the next day and see the Camp Fire about the baby.

"Oh, Nannie, what made you be so hard on the poor woman?" demanded Winona, when at last they were all on their way home.

"I'm sorry I seemed hard on her," Mrs. Bryan answered. "But the best place for a baby is with its mother, if the mother can possibly afford to take care of it. And I'm afraid the only way to make her take it back is to be a little severe with her."

"But supposing she does the other thing?" inquired

Digitized by Google

Billy practically. "Suppose she give the baby up altogether to the Camp Fire?"

"I don't want her to do that either," Mrs. Bryan continued to explain. "But if we should continue to look after the little girl, and know where the mother is, she's going to treat the girls as you saw she did today—as if they were at her orders about it."

"I see," said Billy, his mind at rest. "I beg your pardon, Mrs. Bryan. I guess you did the only way you could. But what's the end of it going to be?"

"We'll have to find that out later," Mrs. Bryan answered.

The next day, being Sunday, Mrs. Nichols had some time off and came out to see them about Dolores. She had scarcely enough money, she said, to do more than look after herself, and she plainly didn't see why things shouldn't continue the way they were. And, after spending some time with the baby, she went away again, leaving her address, and stating that she would be out again next Sunday.

The only thing to do was to call a meeting of the Camp Fire, and this Mrs. Bryan did. After they had sung the "Wohelo for Aye" and gone hurriedly over the minutes of the last business meeting, Mrs. Bryan spoke to them about the baby.

Louise and Edith were for keeping it altogether, if it could be done. Marie and Adelaide and Dorothy

Digitized by Google

Gray, who had had more experience about children than Edith, and were less optimistic than Louise, wanted to give it back to its mother and let it go at that.

"But the mother can't support it," expostulated Winona, who had taken no part in the argument up to this time.

"But neither can the Camp Fire," countered Marie. "It wouldn't be good for the baby to be passed around from hand to hand like a little dog or cat. She wouldn't ever get settled anywhere, or feel as if she belonged to anyone."

"But anyway, she'd have nice clothes and her living, and *lots* of fun," said Louise. "Goodness, I wish I'd been brought up that way! Think of all the different things you'd see, and the different kinds of homes you'd get a chance to live in!"

"Yes, think of it!" said Marie. "I think it would be very hard."

Helen, who had been sitting cross-legged on the rug before the fire, looked up and spoke now.

"I only see one thing to do," she said. "The way of it is this—the baby's father is selling silver polish somewhere, and goodness knows when he'll come back. But he *is* alive, and he *has* a right to the baby, though you all seem to have forgotten him. The mother is around, without much money, and not very anxious to

Digitized by Google

do the work of taking care of a child, though she seems to like to keep on owning it. But she has a right to it, too. And Dolores is a dear little baby, and ought to have good care. But we can't any of us adopt her altogether, because, unless she hadn't any chance at all of a reunion with her family, being passed around wouldn't be a good thing. And anyway——"

"Well?" demanded Louise. "Seems to me you've blocked every way out. *Please,* Helen, don't say we ought to drown her. She's an awfully nice child."

"Have you a plan, dear?" asked her mother, who saw that Helen was by no means through.

"Sort of," Helen answered. "It's only a makeshift, but I don't see anything else for it. The thing to do is to be sure that Mrs. Nichols can't—*really* can't—help the baby, and then find a home for her somewhere here, with some woman who had other little children, and was kind, and to whom the board we would pay for Dolores would be worth keeping the baby for. Then we could look after her ourselves, too, in a sort of fairy-godmother fashion, turn about. And we could only hope that Mrs. Nichols would be able to take her back entirely some time, or that her father might come back."

"I think you are right," her stepmother said.

The other girls talked it over a little longer, and they finally all agreed with Helen. They decided on a

Digitized by Google

woman named Jenny Grace, who was a widow with three little children, and who was known to be kind and careful with them.

"We'll have a hard time managing the money," said Mrs. Bryan. "We can only hope that the Pageant will be unlike most other pageants, and make us lots of money. We haven't much in the treasury just now, because all of you are so busy, between school work and pageant work, that you haven't been keeping at the Camp Fire activities very hard."

"We might keep the baby about between us a little longer," ventured Winona. "Till the Pageant is over. Then even if it hasn't made money, we'll have time to do things to earn some more."

And so it was decided.

But things never turn out quite the way you think they are going to. Three days had elapsed rather uneventfully, school and rehearsals filling them up as usual. The afternoon of the fourth day the problem of Dolores Lulu settled itself beautifully. Mrs. Merriam, coming in from her Ladies' Aid meeting, found Winona, excited, entertaining Mrs. Nichols and another woman, a plainly dressed, elderly countrywoman.

"Mother this is Dolores' grandmother!" Winona announced, in very evident relief.

"Not Mrs. Nichols' mother?" asked Mrs. Merriam; for they were not in the least alike.

Digitized by Google

"No," said the old lady for herself, rather sharply. "I'm her mother-in-law, and I've come to take the baby."

"You have?" exclaimed Mrs. Merriam, "why, I'm very glad to hear that. It has been rather a problem to us, looking after her."

"There's no call that my son's child should be a problem to anyone," stated the old lady. "Her grandfather and I are full able to take care of her, and have wanted her for a year."

The Merriams could only look at Mrs. Nichols the younger in astonishment.

"I didn't want her brought up old-fashioned," she explained, tossing her head. "But as long as you wouldn't let me have any say about my own child, I thought they might as well have her. So will you please pack her things——"

Before the words were well out of her mouth Mrs. Merriam had whisked Winona upstairs, with a word of excuses, and, laughing so that they were afraid they would be heard, they packed Dolores' clothes more swiftly than it had ever been done before. And so ended Louise's second experiment in adoption.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE Camp Fire was a little sorry to miss Dolores Lulu, but it was a very busy Camp Fire just then, and more taken up by the Pageant than by anything else in existence. For the Pageant came off very grandly and successfully, and there was actually some money left over, which, they were told by everyone who had ever had anything to do with a pageant, was a portent and a marvel. The reason they did have it was because they had been loaned the Town Hall free, and had mostly made their own costumes and scenery. The only thing that cost much was the lighting, because they used electricity in quantities, and colored fire in still greater quantities.

It developed into a much more official thing than they had dreamed. The town's Better Business committee had seen in this affair something that they did not want to miss, and advertised it in neighboring towns, something the Camp Fires and the school had not dreamed of doing. The three nights the Pageant played they got a special train to run, and altogether they featured the Camp Fire's simple little amateur Pageant until, as Louise said, its own mothers did not know it.

It began, as they had planned, with the discovery

Digitized by Google

of Fire, an allegorical scene, then came the dances of the elements, wherein Louise was Fire, and the other girls the other three elements, with a big chorus of other dancers, school boys and girls. Then followed the Cave-Man scene, and after that scene after scene from different periods of history, representing the Fire of Learning, the Fire of Faith, the Fire of Intolerance, the Fire of Patriotism, and so on. Though the girls had not at first meant to, naturally in the end the scenes that dealt with the founding of their own town took on an increased importance, and occupied perhaps a quarter of the performance. The town had been in existence as long as the state had, and had taken a part in all the American wars and civic movements that not even the girls themselves had realized till they began to work at the records, and collect material for their pictures.

The crowning scene was the last, where the activities of the Camp Fires were pictured in costume and dialogue, and their ceremonials played through on the stage before the crowded audience. The setting was an Indian village, and the girls, with the Scouts, took part in the Indian dances they had learned, worked at their various crafts, and finally went through a little dialogue, which they had constructed themselves, though Marie had done the final recasting, which gave the audience a very good idea of what Camp Fire Girls are and do.

Digitized by Google

"How did it go?" the girls demanded breathlessly of their mothers, and everyone else they could find to ask, at the end of the first night.

"Splendidly!" everyone answered them, from the High School principal to the housekeeper for the Mitchells, who was in the front row, beaming with pride over the splendid showing her charges made in the Pageant. Vicky had made a particular hit as a little Puritan maid who had quite a large part in the Colonial scene, and Lance, as a small Cave-Boy, had had a part wonderfully suited to him, which included a stuffed bear.

"Those children are certainly good children now," she went on to Winona, in the interval before they ran up. "Vicky helps Miss Marie with the Blue Birds, and the way it's showed her how to wheel her little brother and sister into line is wonderful. The Camp Fire Girls have been sort of aunts to them, as you might say, Miss Winona. I wouldn't ask for a better set of children, and they were such wild little savages when I came, I didn't know whether I'd want to stay or not. But I wouldn't leave now for the world."

"Wasn't that a big bear I almost carried in alone, Mrs. Jennings?" Lance demanded here, coming up excitedly. "Don't you suppose I'll make a good Boy Scout when I'm older?"

Digitized by Google

"I'm sure you will," Winona answered for Mrs. Jennings, "and my brother says so, too."

"Did he?" said Lance, and beamed all over.

"Yes, he did," Winona was able to answer truthfully.

"He'd do anything to be a good Scout by and bye," said Mrs. Jennings.

"That was a hard week we put in, each of us," thought Winona as she turned away, "but it was certainly worth it."

Winona had received her full share of praise for the Pageant, which was so largely her idea, but the most unexpected thing was what happened to Louise Lane. She did her Fire dance and her Jeanne D'Arc scene, everyone said, splendidly. But other people did their work splendidly, too, especially Marie Hunter and Edith Hillis, who had managed the Blue Birds in the fairy dances that were shown at the beginning and end of each episode, and Louise didn't think much about her share except to be glad it was all right.

But the end of it for Louise was an offer from a moving-picture man to come and be in his company! He was in the audience, and had filmed their Pageant for his company's weekly news-picture. And Louise's famous hair and expression had made him as interested in her as the Pageant-Mistress had been. The fact that

Digitized by Google

she was scarcely sixteen made her all the better for his purpose, he explained serenely when she explained that she was too young to be anything of the sort.

And although Louise was very much thrilled by having the offer she surprised everyone by refusing to consider it, at least for the present.

"Perhaps, if mother's willing, I could try it awhile after school's over next June," she said to him.

So the manager went away, and Louise related her adventure to the other girls with great glee.

They were all at Winona's, before the hearth-fire in the living-room, for it was a Council Fire night, and everyone was there, a picturesque group in their ceremonial gowns, with the bead bands glittering in the firelight.

"It's been a wonderful winter for you, Louise," said Winona. "Think of all the things that have happened to you since we came back from camp!"

Louise smiled, and flung back one of the thick red braids that glittered over her shoulder.

"The most wonderful thing, I think, was getting my Torch-Bearer's rank," she said, fingering the little pin that she had just fastened to the bosom of her gown. "I never in the world thought I should."

"Oh, but think of the other things!" interrupted Adelaide. "Think of finding Roger Mendon, and

Digitized by Google

learning to dance so well, and helping that poor woman out in the country, and——"

"And getting thin," said Louise tranquilly. "That was certainly a pretty nice thing, too."

"And getting prettier," added Winona in a soft voice that nobody but Louise could hear.

"Thank you, Win," said Louise softly. "I wish that was true."

"It is," said Winona. "Tom says so."

"That settles it," said Louise, laughing. "But you know, Adelaide," she went on, turning back to Adelaide, "all those things were just little parts of the Torch Bearing. It was the Camp Fire spirit—any of the rest of the girls would have done the same things if they'd come in their way. As a matter of fact, we were all in it the night we found the woman with the hurt ankle, and Winona rescued Roger as much as I did. As for the dancing, that was just hard work, and teaching the small girls. And that again was working for the Torch Bearer's rank—group-leading, you know. It was all of it Camp Fire."

Adelaide looked at Louise contemplatively.

"I only wish I thought belonging to the Camp Fire had made me as different from what I was before I joined as you are," she said.

"Am I?" said Louise.

Digitized by Google

"Are you?" echoed Mrs. Bryan, who had been listening to what the girls said. "Get up, Louise, and look at yourself in the mirror."

There was a long mirror at the side of the room, and Louise rose lightly, and crossed to it. Winona and Adelaide lifted two of the candles from the hearth, and held one on either side of her, and they looked at Louise, standing straight and tall between them.

"That's you," said Mrs. Bryan. "Do you think it looks like the Louise Lane we knew last spring?"

Louise looked at the girl in the mirror. She was taller than she had been, and though she was sturdily built still, she was not too much so for her height. The heavy plaits of red-gold hair fell on either side of a face that was not too rounded, now, for good looks. The freckles that still lingered on her cheeks could not hide the rosy color of them, nor how transparent and pretty her skin was. And she carried herself as if she were somebody worth while—which she undoubtedly was.

"Why, she seems all right," said Louise carelessly, turning away from the mirror. But her heart was beating faster. For she remembered the too-plump, too-careless, cheerful Louise of last year, whom everybody liked, but everybody rather laughed at. And this was really quite a different girl, and a greatly improved one.

Digitized by Google

The rest laughed, and suddenly Adelaide called out, "What's the matter with Louise?" And the rest answered in a mischievous chorus, "She's all right!" And Louise didn't in the least know what to do.

She was saved from having to do anything by the patter of little feet into the room. Florence Merriam, accompanied by Puppums, dashed in.

"Oh, there's a letter!" she cried out. "There's a letter from Roger, and mother's bringing it up!"

The Camp Fire sprang to its feet with one impulse.

"Oh, did Roger get back all right?" they asked, for by now everybody knew the whole story of Roger Mendon, and most of the girls had known him and liked him.

Mrs. Merriam, following close on Florence's heels, replied.

"Roger's boat got across quite safely," she said, "and he's at home with his people."

"Read the letter!" clamored the girls; and Mrs. Merriam, who looked as if she had something very important to read them, sat down in the circle of girls, and read parts of it aloud.

Then she handed it to Louise and Winona, who read it all through together, in a corner.

"I have found out how I came over to Canada," part of it said. "A French soldier a cousin of mine

Digitized by Google

met in France told him. I was hurt at the taking of a little French town, and that was when I forgot things. The French people knew I would be worse treated if it was known I was English, and I was just silly enough then to tell it; so they dressed me like a poor French boy, and smuggled me on a troop-ship going back to Canada. They had to do it so slyly that there wasn't any time to tell anyone even what little they knew about me.

"Mother is very happy to have me back, and says that when the war is done you are all to come over and spend a summer with us in England. We are cabling you the reward, which is to be half for the Scouts, half for the Camp Fire Girls."

They read it over again, this part, and then read it aloud to all the girls.

For a moment nobody spoke.

Then Adelaide voiced what all the rest of them wanted to say.

"Cabling you the reward, half for the Camp Fire Girls! What reward does he mean?"

"Reward?" echoed Louise hazily. Then a light broke on her. "Do you mean——"

"Does he mean——" said Winona at the same moment.

For both of them remembered, now, that when they had come across that advertisement in the old London

Digitized by Google

Times, the one that had led to the finding of Roger, it had spoken of a reward. They had laughed about it, and wished that the Camp Fire might have it. And then they had never thought of it again.

"He is cabling the money, which is quicker and safer than any other way of sending it," their Guardian explained. "There was a reward of what amounts to a thousand dollars for giving Roger back to his people. He was rather an important person in his own place, my dears."

Winona looked surprised—indeed, she felt so surprised that she had no room for the other feeling. But Louise had; and grinned a little to herself, remembering certain of the girls in school who had been a bit superior about associating with Roger, because nobody knew who he was, nor where he had come from.

"I think," she said wickedly to herself, "Sophie Burns is going to be awfully sorry she was so particular about the boys she was polite to!"

"Do you think we ought to take it?" Marie was asking gravely. "As a matter of fact, the Camp Fire really had nothing to do with looking after Roger. It's different with the Scouts, for he was a Scout, and belonged to them, and they helped him as a corporate body. But we didn't."

The other girls looked grave too, for what Marie

Digitized by Google

said was true. Yet—five hundred dollars *was* a good deal of money not to take!

"As a matter of fact," added Adelaide, "it's Winnie and Louise who should have the money."

"But we couldn't!" exclaimed Winona indignantly. "Good gracious, you don't take money for being nice to your friends! And Roger knew that, or if he didn't it wasn't because he hadn't been told. His uncle spoke to father about it, and wanted us four to take the money, and we all wouldn't—naturally. But they're trying to do the next best thing, don't you see?"

"No, I don't," said Marie obstinately.

"Well, I'll explain, then," said Louise.

"Go on," said Marie, with a note in her voice that sounded like "You can say what you please but it won't do any good."

So Louise went on.

"Winona and I—I'm not going to discuss the boys' end of it, because you say anyway that the Scouts have a right to take the money—Winona and I belong to an organization called the Camp Fire Girls. And that organization says we ought to do several things, and be several things. It says we ought to give service, if you remember. And it says, somewhere else,—will someone say the Fire-Maker's Desire?"

The girls answered her together.

Digitized by Google

"As fuel is brought to the fire
So I purpose to bring
My strength
My ambition
My heart's desire
My joy
And my sorrow
To the fire
Of humankind.
For I will tend
As my fathers have tended
And my father's fathers
Since time began
The fire that is called
The love of man for man
The love of man for God."

"All right," said Louise. "Now, as you may remember, some of us were off on a motor ride."

Edith giggled a little at the remembrance of that wild ride, and the way they got lost.

"You mean when we went hunting for Dolores Lulu's mother?" she asked.

"Yes," said Louise, "I do. Now, we were trying to carry out Camp Fire ideals, so we picked that woman off the kitchen floor, and put her daughter to bed, and looked after her, between us all, till the doctor came—and we knew how to do it because of the Camp Fire training. Anybody object to that?"

"Why, no, that's true," admitted Marie, seeing that nobody else spoke.

"Very well," went on Louise triumphantly. "Now

Digitized by Google

—still because Winona and I knew First Aid, something we'd taken up as a part of Camp Fire work, the doctor elected us to sit up with Mary's mother's sprained ankle. And Winona—still, as the books say, in pursuance of her duty, kept herself awake by reading everything she could find and part of it was the London *Times*. And that was how she found the advertisement—and wakened me out of a beautiful sleep to tell me about it, as I very well remember. Now, doesn't that trace straight back to our being Camp Fire Girls, may I ask?"

She looked around her triumphantly.

But Marie still looked doubtful.

"Didn't you put it in the Count?" insisted Louise.

"Yes, I did, of course," Marie answered.

"Then that proves it was a part of what we did as a part of Camp Karonya," said Louise.

"I think she's proved her point," said Mrs. Bryan.

But Marie was obstinate still.

"Camp Karonya didn't find Roger originally," she insisted.

"Two of it did," said Louise. "To be exact, Winona did, first. But I don't think we'd have done all we did if we hadn't been following the Law of the Fire. Come, Marie, don't act as if being Camp Fire Girls wasn't any good at all!"

And finally Marie allowed herself to be convinced.

Digitized by Google

"*Weren't* any good," she said weakly, being a professor's daughter and accurate, and let it go at that.

So it went through.

"What shall we do with the money, now we've deigned to accept it?" Louise wanted to know.

"Put it in the bank where we keep our ordinary balance, of course," said the treasurer.

"And then?"

Everybody looked blank. It *was* such a lot of money for one Camp Fire to own.

"Save it for our camping trips?" suggested Edith.

But the other girls thought that would take all the fun out of working for the money.

"We can put it in the bank, anyway," they said, "and think what to do with it afterwards."

So they decided on that.

But on top of this came a suggestion from—of all people—little Florence Merriam.

"Why don't you use it for one of those orphans Louise is always wanting to take care of?" she asked. "A nice war orphan, maybe."

The girls sat up and looked at each other. Why, it was a splendid suggestion!

"Where would we get it?" was the only question that was asked, and it came from Louise. "All the orphans I collect turn out to belong to somebody else.

Digitized by Google

I'd want to be sure they were the real thing, warranted to last."

The other girls laughed.

"There must be plenty of little girls in the world who need care," said Helen. "Perhaps we can find one."

"Perhaps," said Louise. "But—I think we have done enough planning about it. Maybe something will come our way."

"Do things come peoples' way without being gone after?" Marie demanded.

"I think so," chimed in Adelaide.

They looked across at Adelaide. She looked particularly happy to-night, as if something very nice had happened.

"What is it, Adelaide?" asked Winona, recognizing the look. "Have you any special reason to think so?"

"Oh, I've scarcely been able to wait to tell you all!" said Adelaide happily. "Something perfectly lovely has happened to me! Not as wonderful as being asked to act in movies, but nice, just the same. You know I've been putting up more and more preserves, with Frances' help, whenever I could find the time. I thought we might make enough money to get new paper and paint for the flat. But when we did the orders kept coming in, so we've kept on. And to-

Digitized by Google

day a big delicatessen firm in the city wrote to the grocers here that they wanted the address of someone who could supply them with home-made jams and jellies, and they sent them on to me. It's a great big thing, and I'll have to hire people to help me. So I'm getting along splendidly. Lonny and I have been figuring up, and he's going to look after the business end of it, and we're going to make it a regular business with a trade name, and at the very most discouraging figures we could plan it will mean the difference between just getting along, and having all the comforts we want. And Lonny and I will be able to save up to go to college ourselves, and send Frances, likely. Isn't that lovely?"

"I think we ought to rise up and sing a cheer for Adelaide and her preserves, right this minute," said Louise, springing to her feet. And so they did.

"Now one for Louise and the movies!" Adelaide responded, when they had finished. So they did that too.

"Now, Winona!" said everybody.

"Oh, but I haven't done a thing!" said Winona, laughing.

"But you have!" said Louise. "You've been the one that's kept us all up to the things we've done. Girls, this is a cheer for Winona, Flashing Ray of Light!

Digitized by Google

She's made us what we are to-day—I hope she's satisfied—as the poet says."

So they sprang to their feet again, and sang a cheer to Winona.

"But I don't know why!" said Winona, in laughing perplexity. "I haven't done a thing!"

But the girls, laughing, closed in around Louise and Winona, and sang the cheer:

"Wohelo for aye,
Wohelo for aye,
Wohelo, Wohelo, Wohelo for aye!
Wohelo for work,
Wohelo for health,
Wohelo, Wohelo, Wohelo, for love!"

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

This book should be returned to the Library on or before the last date stamped below.

A fine of five cents a day is incurred by retaining it beyond the specified time.

Please return promptly.

JAN 30 '54 H

WIDENER

WIDENER
SEP 13 2003
AUG 16 2004
BOOK DUE
CANCELLED

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google